THE MISTRESS OF SHERBURNE

AMANDA M. DOUGLAS

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THE MISTRESS OF SHERBURNE

BY

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DELL SHERBURNE BROWN

OF EUREKA, CAL.

There is a nearness and similarity of tastes that begets friendship. There is also a sympathy between those hitherto unknown, kindled by some chance word, some unexpected circumstance. From a distance a stranger hand may send a flower of regard to bloom in unfading remembrance.

A. M. D.

Newark, 1896.

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THE MISTRESS OF SHERBURNE.

CHAPTER I.

THE NEXT MORNING.

LYNDELL SHERBURNE dismissed her maid, and stood glancing out of the window. She had slept late ; for that matter, no one had gone to bed until past midnight. November had been full of Indian Summer days, with hazy skies and golden red lights. It hardly looked as if winter could be approaching, so soft and imperceptible was the change. The sun was veiled in a gray underroof of cloud that did not indicate rain—was rather, indeed, a touch of autumnal tenderness.

Down in the path stood Leonard Beaumanoir and his wife,—her cousin and her dear friend,—who had somehow seemed of kin to her—that mysterious kinship of love, quite as strong in many cases as the tie of relationship. He was evidently pointing out places that had an intense interest for him. He stood up very straight, proud, and, Dell thought, with all the air of ownership.

Did it give her a pang? Last evening she had formally resigned her birthright, that had been a source of contention at first—the place and position that had cost so much in pain and protest and friction, and at last brought about such a reward of love and appreciation.

Had she been right to relinquish it? Had her father desired it above all things for her?

He had given it up for love, when the supreme test came. Or perhaps he had dreamed of a future here. Dell smiled a little. So had she. The future had indicated a line of duty in which she had meant to strive for happiness in serving others. Love had come and crowned her, and was to lead her away in the fullness of time. Was there anything to regret?

They had gone over all the arguments, for and against, a great many times during the past two months. How the secret had been so well kept was a wonder. But Uncle Beaumanoir had understood the force of Dell's and Dr. Carew's reasoning. He could not relinquish his present affiliations and interests. His life would be cramped in this narrow sphere. True, he might not always remain in a great city. Indeed, he had an ideal of years of restfulness after he had borne his share of the heat and burthen of the day. He was full of the eager aspirations of youth; he was an impetuous lover also.

"But you see I should not feel free to lay any further burthen on Aunt Julia," said Dell. "If I went away someone must come and take the oversight of Aunt Aurelia. And the someone must have a vital interest in Sherburne House. Even she could hardly have this, unless I turned the place over to her;" and Dell smiled persuasively. "It is too full of family interest to be suffered to go to decay."

"You know, years ago, we counted on seeing Leonard here," began Bertram Carew, with fine ingenuousness. "It is no really new idea. And if we decided to wait years for our happiness, Miss Aurelia might come to feel

that she stood in the way. I should not cordially accept any plan that even suggested the death of a person, though I should be willing enough to serve seven years for Dell. But this cuts the Gordian knot, and I feel sure Miss Aurelia will approve when she gets accustomed to the idea. It is not even as if Tessy was coming a perfect stranger."

Mr. Beaumanoir had been looking at the matter from his own point of view, fearing that he might, indeed, be suspected of influencing his niece and ward in his son's behalf. But he saw at once that Dell was heroic enough to remain here years, and sacrifice the freshness of her youth in making Sherburne House bright and pleasant to Aunt Aurelia. And in that event it did suggest freedom contingent upon death.

"It is not as if Dell was giving up everything," continued Bertram. "She will have more than enough in the other investments. An old estate like this needs the real owner's interest and attention. And we all know it has been Leonard's dream."

Mr. Whittingham looked at it in something of the same light. Since Carew would not be likely to come here to live, Leonard seemed the best possible owner. If Lyndell had chosen some one of the young men whose interests would always be here,—and there had been a vague half hope that his nephew might be the fortunate one, since Leonard was not,—he could not help considering the project in its most favorable light.

Mr. Beaumanoir found himself being persuaded against his preconceived notions of justice. And when Aunt Aurelia acceded to the plan with a curious hesitating tenderness, the three most concerned gave their assent. Dr. and Miss Carew were the only others aware of

the transfer. Leonard had been surprised beyond measure, and had tried honestly and earnestly to persuade his cousin to reconsider.

"Dell," he declared, "it is heaping coals of fire upon my head. That you should have been my darling's best friend, as well as my own, seems quite enough. And how you managed to persuade all these people——"

"They all saw the force of it. Though I think your father was the hardest to convince;" and the young girl smiled, with a gleam of triumph.

"I am glad of that," decisively.

Miss Carrick had drawn her away in a corner when there had been a little lull.

"My dear," she began upbraidingly, "how could you saddle another old woman on Mrs. Leonard? I've been in love with her from the very first, but to make me a fixture——"

"Why, the idea was Leonard's long ago. He had the assurance to propose it to me," and Lyndell's eyes danced with a mirthful light. "It is paying him back in his own coin. And Uncle Beaumanoir said you should never go back to that desolate place to live alone. You and Aunt Aurelia have grown to be such friends, you really need each other. And I know Leonard will feel that it is a very small offset to the estate."

"My dear, it's the kindness and the thought." Her voice was tremulous and the tears stood in her eyes. "Your uncle had already offered me a home. I used to think I couldn't be satisfied to end my days anywhere except at Carrick Court, but when the sisterly companionship was gone—well, I should soon have followed her. You've given me beauty for ashes and the oil of joy for mourning. I hope God will restore it fourfold—tenfold."

"I think he has," said Lyndell Sherburne reverently.

They both remembered the first meeting, Dell's first Christmas at Sherburne House, and each knew what was in the other's thought as they kissed in wordless tenderness.

Looking from her window now, Lyndell said to herself, as she had said publicly last night, "The new mistress of Sherburne House." And she knew there was no renunciation without a pang.

Leonard turned and caught her eye. With a smile he beckoned to her. She ran lightly down.

"Well,"—kissing her on the forehead,—"have you slept on your munificent proffer and repented? Or am I to bring all my legal lore to bear upon your——"

"You will not find a suitable word in all your legal lore," laughing in the pause. "I don't mean to say that Sherburne House isn't dear to me—I shall never say that. But like Desdemona, I did perceive 'a divided duty.' Do you think I could have gone away with a light heart?"

"You wouldn't have gone at all, Lyndell. I have come to understand you quite well, cousin mine. And for Bertram's sake I accept the great gift. I can never forget that I owe him the health and energy I have to-day. And you would have made him wait year after year. But it will always have a sort of hallowed consciousness to us both that it is still your home. And for a few years I must devote a good deal of my time to business. This winter we shall live in Washington in a most penurious fashion and save money."

Tessy laughed at that.

Julius came, and rang the breakfast bell long and loud.

"Until Dell's marriage nothing at all is to be changed," said Leonard, seating Tessy beside him. "She is to be the head of the house and we the occasional guests, except in the few outside matters that she desires me to undertake."

Tessy had greeted the two elder ladies with charming sweetness. Dell took care that the conversation should flow in the usual everyday channels.

They had not finished when Bertram came in. He rallied them on their indolence.

"But we sat up nearly all night," declared Aunt Aurelia, "while you went home with no misgiving to your conscience."

"Did anybody have a misgiving? I thought it was serenely settled. I thought you accepted the hard and cold fact of Leonard's added responsibility. Come to look at you all, you are not haggard or careworn. Could I have a cup of that fragrant coffee? And then could you spare Miss Sherburne as a punishment for her temerity? It is a magnificent day for driving through winding lanes. I have promised her to my aunt for luncheon, and at four I must take my train. I shall have to go and redeem my reputation. No one can complain of my overworking, the past three months."

Dell poured his coffee. A soft flush wandered over her face, though she had done it many a time before. There was some merry badinage, but it dropped to more serious matters when Lyndell went to change her attire.

"I am not going to hurry Dell, though so far as I am concerned, I should like to marry her to-morrow," and Carew gave a soft laugh. "But father is counting on seeing a good deal of her, and we are both young enough to wait a while."

"I shall have a voice in the wedding," announced Leonard. "Where is the good of being master of Sherburne if you can't have your own way now and then?"

Bertram nodded acquiescently.

It seemed a day made for lovers, the two thought as they drove around familiar ways, finding new beauties everywhere in the ripeness of the late autumn. The air was full of fragrance, the slow-going restful air that roused no pulses. A day of days to these two, who had seemed so entangled with the affairs of others for weeks and weeks. Yet they made no plans and discounted no future. To simply enjoy was enough.

They did more planning at Sherburne. Mr. Beaumanoir drove over, and he and Leonard discussed various points. If Miss Carrick had cherished ever so small a misgiving, it had to vanish. Leonard's hearty indorsement of his cousin's kindly bequest went to her heart at once. There could be no doubt of his sincerity.

"You and Aunt Aurelia must make up your minds to live to a good old age," he said. "Why, it would not be Sherburne House without Aunt Aurelia. She is connected with my earliest boyhood's memories."

Tessy had been spending most of the morning in Miss Sherburne's room. They, too, had been talking over the surprise the deed of gift had proved to Leonard and his young wife.

"We all have a feeling that it was done especially for each one of us," said Aunt Aurelia. "When it was first broached to me by Mr. Whittingham and Dr. Carew,—who would not have Bertram suspected of ulterior motives,—it did seem as if she had my pleasure and gratification at heart. No one of the younger generation can understand how dear Leonard was to his grandfather,

and how he came to take the place of the son whose untimely death among strangers we always deplored. Through his boyhood Leonard was more at home here than in his father's house. His room, his horse, and his 'boy,' were always here. I can hardly believe that we could have been so blind to Lyndell's rights. My dear, I feel now as if Providence had sent you here that the strange threads of her life should be woven in one beautiful warp. God had planned it from the beginning, but he let us go on in the hardness of our hearts, until her very sweetness and nobleness won us. However we may regret certain acts and prejudices, I can see now they were to bring us through paths we had not known, or, having had glimpses of them, had turned away from willfully."

"I want to try to make you happy," said the soft girlish voice wistfully. "If the place could have remained Dell's; if Leonard——"

Did she wish that?

"We all tried." Aunt Aurelia gave a retrospective smile. "Even she, poor child, did her best and noblest. But now I can understand what she and Leonard would have missed, though I did long for a marriage between them. Then we all gave it up. Surely, if anyone ever won the right to choose her own happiness, Lyndell has done it. Her choice will, of course, take her away from us, but she will always be a daughter of the house, fondly loved and cherished. Some other woman coming here as Leonard's wife might not understand the many fine-drawn lines that will always bind us together. My dear, I can confess with heartfelt satisfaction that I am glad it is you. As Leonard says, you might be Dell's younger sister."

Tessy twined her arms around the elder's neck, and kissed her. "You have all given me such a lovely welcome," she rejoined.

"We are all glad to see Leonard so happy, and we admit the wisdom of his choice. So I feel as if Dell had given him back to me for the remainder of my pilgrimage. We can all see that if she had brought a stranger here, the aspect of everything must have changed. And so, my dear Tessy, you must be patient with our whims and bygone notions, remembering that, at the most, it cannot be many years."

"I am glad she has given Leonard and myself a real duty in the matter, and both you and Miss Carrick must believe it will be a pleasure. I want some certain purposes to life; I want to make some return for her generosity, and when it comes my turn, I shall strive not to let you miss her in any care and attention, only in the absence of her own dear self."

There was a little tap at the partly open door, and Leonard entered at the first sound of both voices, smiling with a glow of satisfaction.

"Cousin Carrick said I should find you here," with a glance at Tessy. He drew up an ottoman, and seated himself, pulling Tessy down on his knee, while his other arm stole around Aunt Aurelia's waist.

"I shan't ask you if you are going to love her, and all that," glancing up in Miss Sherburne's face with irresistible fondness; "I know you do already. And since Lyndell must go some time,—or dim the glad young love of her life by staying,—you are to take us for your children."

"Grandchildren," returned Miss Aurelia, with a humorous smile. "I brought up the other generation of children."

"It is like a wonderful dream, though Heaven will bear me witness that I gave up the desire manfully, I do not think any spot of earth could be so dear to me as Sherburne House. Beaumanoir is not half so precious. I am afraid you will have to lay some 'metes and bounds' upon me, lest I grow too proud of the heritage. Only you must know, Aunt Aurelia, that I could have taken it in no other way. And it is only mine in trust for those that come after me. It must be as it has been, the gathering place of the Sherburne clan. Heaven grant that we may see many happy years in it. And if any misfortune—such as befell our dear Millicent—should come to Dell, this shall be her place of refuge, and we shall all join in the best that human love can give."

"Oh, Leonard!" Tessy shivered.

"Heaven keep all sorrows and trials from her," he said with reverent solemnity. "And I know she and Bertram will always count it as home. They were made for each other from the beginning; I don't wonder she didn't take me," laughingly.

"I can understand now how a life with many activities in it will suit her better. I begin to realize that it was my many ties and duties, and the consciousness that I was useful, that gave me a keen satisfaction through all my earlier years. I was daughter, sister, then mother, with ever widening interest. If I had stood alone life would have been dreary—and she had none of these near relationships. Yes, let us all pray for her happiness," and the tears stood in Miss Aurelia's eyes. It would always be a source of regret that she had done so little toward it in those earlier years. It made her tenderer toward Tessy Murray.

Then they talked a little of the future. In a day or two they must go up to Washington and settle themselves for the winter. There would be a Christmas visit of course. Why, that was hardly six weeks away!

"The time has flown on the wings of the wind," declared Leonard. "I am afraid I am getting demoralized by all the good fortune that has come to us. And there is the luncheon bell, or I believe it is really dinner."

Tessy took the head of the table with a pretty dignity. Afterward the elders retired for a rest, and Leonard ordered up the horses. It was growing much colder, and the soft autumn haze had dropped out of the sky. The wind came with an eerie sound from the firs and pines. Yet it was not bleak, and here and there clumps of bloom hung out defiant signals. There were long stretches of neglected land, great thickets of overgrown shrubbery that must be cared for and trained to profitable woodland. Times had changed with the estate. Old times had passed away, and the new were coming in. Leonard felt that his experience in the wider world would make him a better master. Perhaps if it had come to him years ago, he would have dropped down to a life of ease and indolence, and gone to decay with it.

Millicent and Fanny had come over. Soon after the doctor drove up with Dell. They had started Bertram on his northward journey. Dell's eyes were softened with a lustrous light, and a delicious color kept going and coming, deepening at the glances turned upon her now and then. It seemed as if a new sacredness had crowned her life.

Indeed, the lovers had been discussing *their* life in the time to come. How they should use it for the best interests of humanity, how they must strive against self-

ishness in this wonderful love, which seemed sweeter and more absorbing than ever before.

"I hate to go back to the city alone!" Bertram cried impetuously. "It seems as if we had just come to the true understanding of what love really meant. There have been so many things to divide our interest, so many calls upon you. I have half a mind to run away with you!"

He looked daring enough to do it.

"But we shall have years and years—if God should spare us!"

Oh, how could she endure any separation? And by the pang that wrung her soul she knew the strength of her love, the first virgin force of true regard.

"God will spare us; he has given us to each other; he has kept us from mistakes that we might reach the highest and best within us. And in our own supreme happiness we must not forget that we are to give as freely as we have received. We must try to make the world happier, as well as better."

Dr. Carew would fain have taken her home with him, when they had said good-by to Bertram at the station.

"But I have been away all day. I must not forget the other duty," smilingly.

"You are right. I am a selfish old fellow. I dare say some day Bertram will be jealous of my claims."

"I think you have a right to claim a good deal. Oh, do you remember that first autumn, and all you did for me? Your tender counsel set me in the right way. I haven't always done credit to you, but my love has never wavered. And oh, I wanted to belong to you then;" giving his arm a rapturous squeeze.

He winked hard to keep the tears from his eyes. "And I always wanted a daughter," he answered softly.

He kissed her and set her down at Sherburne House. Millicent had come over and Dell found a pretty family group in the old sitting room. Miss Carrick was knitting, Aunt Aurelia oddly enough doing nothing. There was a stately kind of attraction in her very idleness. Tessy was tatting and her fingers flew like birds in the graceful employment.

Dell came around and kissed Aunt Aurelia, who asked softly if her day had been delightful.

"We have been trying on *our* new honors," said Leonard. "Tessy thinks I will make an admirable country squire. I have the proper amount of easy dignity, of the enjoyment of leisure——"

"That was not quite the way I put it," commented Tessy, with a half smile.

"You wouldn't believe what ambitious ideas she has in her wise little head. She'll make me President some day. She has all the steps planned. Or minister to St. James's."

"She must keep you up as an offset to Dell's spoiling you," declared Millicent. "Dell, you should have put a price upon Sherburne House, and thereby tested his real love for it."

"How hard you all are to me! And now I am going up to Washington to help fight a big case, and Tessy will have to sit at home and mope unless someone comes to cheer her up. I've been having a grand holiday, but you will see that it has not thrown me off my balance. And one of its most delightful aspects is the love from you all, that has made my path such a pleasant way to walk in. I can never thank you, but my years to come

must testify to my gratitude. And we shall all feel t
Sherburne House must never cease to be Dell's ho
no matter what others open to her. My dear cousi
shall always owe you more than I can ever repay. Y
influence has helped to shape my character; you h
unconsciously worked a great change in us all. No
can rejoice more unfeignedly in your coming happin
than I. Bertram will be like the dearest of brother
Tessy and myself."

There was a tender depth to his voice, as it mad
little break.

"And to me also," said Millicent, kissing her. "M
the best and truest happiness be yours."

CHAPTER II.

THE CUP THAT CHEERS.

MRS. LONGWORTH accepted her new cousin with outward graciousness, and issued cards for a tea. But she had said to Leonard: "I hope you will never regret the foolish step. You could have advanced yourself so much by a judicious marriage. The only redeeming feature is Dell's gift. She might not have felt so generous toward another woman, though she owed it to you."

"I can't see that we had any claim, as it was willed to her father before she was born," he answered, rather shortly.

"Oh, yes!" with a wave of her jeweled hand and an irritating smile. "But since she is to marry out of the family—well, most things come around right if one waits. And Mrs. Leonard is very pretty and presentable. In your walk of life you will find that that counts."

Leonard was too angry to trust himself to reply. How much Ethel was growing like her mother, save that she had broader intellectual views. That was doubtless owing to the trend of the times.

So when he came home one afternoon he found she had made a most cordial call on Tessy, and explained that the tea was to be given in her honor, and begged her to wear her wedding gown and remain to a family dinner afterward, and Tessy had tacitly accepted. Indeed, she could not have declined without being discourteous.

They had decided under the circumstances not to set up a home of their own. Dell had besought them to come often to Sherburne House. They had a pretty suite of rooms, and their meals furnished privately when they chose. Washington was filling up rapidly. Congress would soon begin its session.

When Leonard heard of the call on his return at night, his temper flared up at once, remembering Ethel's comments.

"You shall not stir a step!" he declared. "The assurance of the thing! Does she think she can order everybody about? I shall write at once and decline. Are the cards out? I shall enjoy her mortification."

"Leonard!" Two lovely eyes were raised pleadingly.

He was striding up and down, adding fuel, the fuel she could not see, to the flames. The insincerity of the affair angered him more deeply every instant. To show off Tessy in her wedding gown as a curiosity, and make unfriendly comments on her afterward!

"No, you shall not stir a step!"

She locked her arm in his, clasping her slim hands, and, falling into step, glanced up with quiet purpose in every line of her face. "When you have calmed down a little we will discuss it," she said, in a soft, reasonable tone.

"There is nothing to discuss. Mistress Ethel will find that she doesn't rule me and mine altogether."

"Yes, there are several points to discuss. One is that you would not willingly place me in a false position at the outset of my life here. There is no real reason for making an enemy of Mrs. Longworth."

"You don't understand. You couldn't be friends if you lived together a thousand years! Ethel is a selfish,

fashionable woman, who takes up the stars of the season,—anyone who will add *éclat* to her house—and drops them as she chooses. She shall not patronize you. I would rather have an open enemy than a friend ready to play false at the whim of a moment."

"You and Mr. Longworth are friends in the ordinary acceptation of the term?"

"Well—yes. He has many fine qualities, without being really noble."

"And you have been a favorite guest at your cousin's house?"

Leonard laughed with a little scorn. "Yes, I was one of the attractions, thanks to my good looks and, perhaps, good manners."

"Then you see a break now would be laid at my door. Your mother and sisters and Lyndell will visit at the house. You will place me quite outside, for such a breach cannot be made up. You will give her an opportunity of explaining that 'you and she were excellent friends before your marriage, but——' and a shrug of the shoulders or a rising of the brow can say a great deal in one's disfavor."

He stopped pacing and drew her down to the sofa, pressing her fondly to his heart and kissing her with half repentant tenderness.

"Do you really desire to go to this fandango?"

Tessy smiled. "I have been to teas and teas. I have had receptions in my honor. I think we owe a certain respect and attention to the received regulations of society. We are beginning a new life here, and to blunder would be quite as unfortunate for you as for me."

"Oh, wise little woman! What else?"

"Do not allow a fit of temper or some fancied grievance to persuade you to a step you will regret later on. Someone must stand sponsor for me, unless you desire to keep me from the hollow-hearted world altogether."

"But the insincerity, the—there are reasons you know nothing about."

"I think I am aware of them. Mrs. Longworth would have been very glad to have married you to some stylish heiress. All your family had an objection to your choice."

"Tessy!" with more than a husband's authority.

"It is true. I think further acquaintance has disarmed the prejudice, as it often does. I am as proud of my family as you can possibly be of yours. And I shall be proud of winning their regard, their love. I do not want to bar out a single relative, no matter what the feeling may have been at first."

"You generous darling!"

"Do you suppose life is all whims and pleasures for one's self—that there is no higher duty? I dare say Mrs. Longworth has made some unkind comments. Why, Leonard,"—her sweet face flushing,—"you might have made a better marriage in a worldly point of view. I have met rich and cultivated women who seemed to have every grace, who were worthy of the love of the noblest man."

"But I am not the noblest man."

A dancing light came back to his eyes, and the lines about his mouth softened.

"You are the best to me—the man I love. Whatever comes to you now, prosperity, station, adversity, sickness, or any misfortune, I shall be glad to share."

The tender solemnity of her tone touched him immeasurably.

"Think how Dell with her unfortunate beginning has won everyone's love whose good opinion she really values. She made the path smooth for me. I want to be such a wife to you, Leonard, that those who care most for you will admit that you could not have chosen more wisely. This is one of the aims I have set for myself. Oh, help me, will you not?"

Her beseeching voice melted his heart. He had not thought he had any other duty than resentment for Ethel Longworth's half sneers.

"Let us suffer a little wrong rather than do wrong. Let us forgive any uncharitableness, and choose those things that make for peace."

"Upon my word, I am glad you are not a 'new woman' studying law; I might be pitted against you some day, and then, ah me!"

He laughed pleasantly, and kissed her with sudden rapture. He understood the appeal to his better nature, to his higher sense of right, and he could see now that resentment would be a foolish mistake. Yet he did hate to gratify Ethel in this manner. Tessy would have no difficulty in making her way in society. She would not aim at being a belle or a brilliant woman. And he was still so much in love that he felt to grudge the hours devoted to the gay world, for it seemed to him society was like an ogre ready to drain the best out of one, and toss him or her aside when the charm was on the wane.

"I suppose Ethel made herself extremely fascinating?" Leonard said, with a spice of irony.

"She was very pleasant, certainly. She said what was true enough, that *you* must keep up with the friends you had made already, and, as we would be likely to have a good many invitations out, it was best to begin

properly. So she had decided, that as she was the only relative here, it was her duty, and she should be very happy to undertake it. She had settled upon next Thursday, if we had no engagement, from four to six. She will send the carriage for us, and if you could not go at that time,—but she begs you will make an effort, and she said in the sweetest of tones that she had found you very obliging all last winter,—you must come as soon afterward as you can. She was to stop and order the cards, and would write a note to you explaining the matter."

"Well, I might have said some hard things to her if she had come to me. I feel as if she had, in her imperious fashion, outgeneraled us, and I am not sure I wanted you to be taken under her wing."

"I needn't remain under it," laughed Tessy. "When I have such a pretty nest of my own, and such a grand mogul for a husband, I shall not stray about very much; so you need not be afraid. For your sake I am glad to begin in a proper manner, and we must admit this is only a rightful courtesy, unless she meant to show you you had lost caste."

"I do suppose, after a little, I should have considered it mean in her not to give us some social recognition. So, you see, I convict myself of being unreasonable."

"But you come to reason when you look at a matter from every point of view. It is not the first time," with a winsome light in her eyes.

"Oh, you little flatterer! Well, then, I suppose we must put on our best bibs and tuckers, and most engaging smiles, and do honor to the occasion. I think you are right, Tessy, and yet I feel as if I would like to have a little bout with Ethel before I accepted this—what shall we call it—compliment at her hands."

"Some things are better quietly overlived," said the young wife.

Just then their dinner came up, and the waiter arranged the table and left them to their own devices. It gave Tessy quite a housewifely feeling to sit here with her husband and minister to him in a dainty fashion, while he waited upon her with lover-like devotion.

"You are a wise little woman," he said again, in a tone of commendation. "And now, put on your wraps, and let us take a run out somewhere. You have not been out to-day, I will warrant."

"I have found so many things to do. And there were letters to answer. Oh, you need not imagine that time hangs heavy on my hands."

She was so charming and piquant with her ready little deferences, and yet he felt that in matters of principle she would never swerve from the finest right. The heart of her husband could safely trust her.

Mrs. Longworth's note to her cousin was very diplomatic and sensible. Leonard saw the force of it, and yet he felt the matter placed him under certain obligations that annoyed him extremely. He did not want to ask any favors for Tessy, or feel that one had been granted her.

He came home early the day of the tea. He had settled to quite a good-natured view of the case. Mr. Longworth wished him to meet a friend at dinner, who had various large interests in the West, and a legal struggle for someone to take up. The attention was rather flattering.

Tessy donned her bridal gown that she had laid away with a half wonder if it would ever be needed any more. Leonard had brought her a bunch of choice white roses. The carriage came and they were soon set down at the

handsome mansion. Tessy was shown upstairs. Millicent and Dell were there to greet her.

"Oh, what a delightful surprise!" she cried.

"Ethel bound us to the strictest secrecy. And we were glad enough of an excuse to come and honor you. It was a happy thought on Ethel's part."

"You can depend on Ethel for doing the conventionally right thing," said Millicent. "I had counted on some form of social compliment."

Tessy felt thankful she had not been betrayed into a spasm of resentment.

Mrs. Longworth entered elegant and smiling.

"You have taken very good care of Leonard," she said, with her greeting. "He looks proud and handsome enough for a king, and I am glad he had the grace to come with you. Don't expect such devotion after a year or two, but by that time it gets to be a bore. Isn't this a charming surprise to you?"

"You couldn't have given me a greater pleasure, and I thank you heartily," said Tessy, in an appreciative tone.

"I thought you would feel less strange, as you know so few people. And Milly is a famous card. I suppose we must begin to count out Dell."

Lyndell blushed vividly. The engagement was not to be announced as yet.

The drawing room was fragrant with flowers, and the hall a bower of palms. Millicent was to preside at the coffee, a married friend of Mrs. Longworth's at the tea. Various other small tables were arranged where little groups could sit and gossip. Leonard had been such a favorite the winter before, that society was rather anxious to pass a verdict upon his wife.

She certainly looked very lovely beside her tall, proud

husband. There was no awkwardness, no suggestion of being new to the usages of the gay world. Mrs. Longworth soon found that she needed no especial assistance, and that there would be nothing to utter half apologies about. The guests found her intelligent and well-bred, conversant with the topics of the day, and a knowledge of the wider world. Leonard was evidently very proud of her.

It seemed to Tessy just a succession of introductions, and yet it was very charming. She did wonder if she should remember anyone afterward. There was some exquisitely low music that seemed rather an accompaniment of the conversation than an interference with it, and before they were through, the beautiful rooms were in a blaze of light.

They had a brief respite before the dinner, which was hardly a family affair. Dell and Tessy had so many confidences to exchange. They missed Tessy so at Sherburne House. At Christmas there was to be a household gathering at Beaumanoir, and they were all counting on that. The girls were to remain two or three days, and they planned pleasures for to-morrow.

"We must not waste a moment," said Dell, laughingly. "I wish the time wouldn't go so fast. And you are quite sure you won't be lonely?"

"Lonely!" echoed Tessy. "And with Leonard!"

"He has a gift of keeping matters rather lively," returned Dell, with a nod.

There was a superabundance of gentlemen at dinner. Two young men had been especially invited, as Mr. Jeffries was middle-aged and married. And then they were all treated to a sudden surprise. Mrs. Longworth sent for them to come down to the drawing room.

"There seems to be an influx of cousins," she exclaimed, as a young man rose from the sofa beside her.

"Oh, Archie!" two voices exclaimed.

"Yes, I was bound to have a glimpse of you when I heard you were all here," he began, taking all their hands at once. "Mrs. Beaumanoir I have not seen since her wedding day, but she doesn't look as if repentance had set in."

"But how *did* you hear?"

"I came up from Fortress Monroe to Sherburne, and after having visited around there, thought I would see you all at a glance, and tell you my news. So I just stopped at the hotel long enough to slip into some presentable clothes if the grand function was not over, and Ethel informs me that No. 1 is ended, and No. 2 is to begin shortly. She has kindly invited me to stay. Shall I interfere with anyone's pleasure?"

"Oh!" cried a chorus of voices, as if such a thing was impossible.

"And your news? Is it an engagement or matrimony?" asked Dell mischievously.

Archie flushed warmly. "It is neither," he made answer. "But while I am waiting for a chance to serve my country, a private secretaryship comes to hand—and here in Washington. I am to report to-morrow. It is an old friend of my father's, a man with large mining and railroad interests. I was beginning to think I should be relegated to a life of elegant leisure, that after educating me the country had nothing for me to do. Oh, hillo, Len!"

The cousins shook hands warmly.

Mrs. Longworth had given orders for another cover to be added, and insisted that Archie should remain. The cordial invitation and the prospect of an agreeable evening decided him. Then the other guests made their appearance.

Archie took in Mrs. Beaumanoir as the guest of honor. There was a suggestion of his mother about him in his frank heartiness. Though tall and well-developed, the fine looks of the Sherburnes had not come down to him. Dell had quite outgrown the cousinly likeness that had seemed rather striking when she first came among them. Archie's hair was still a light chestnut, with a curling tendency; hers had changed to softened darker tints. His eyes were full of merry lights, the dark lashes and brows giving them a much deeper aspect. A fair complexion, with traces of wind-burn from ocean breezes, a mouth that shut with a smile, and a line of mustache that was blond, to say the least. A thoroughly good face, Tessy felt, and her heart warmed to the young fellow who somehow suggested Con.

Leonard and Mr. Jeffries retired to the library afterward, with Mr. Longworth ; but the young people had a rather gay evening in the music room. Archie possessed a fine tenor voice, and was extravagantly fond of music. Mrs. Longworth had some calls in the drawing room, but she saw they were quite capable of entertaining each other.

"I've had a delightful evening," Archie said to his cousin's wife; "I wish Dell was going to stay, we always have such good times. But I am very glad to have you in town, and I wonder if I may ask you to take pity on a poor fellow now and then, who really cannot afford the gayeties of society. I've always felt as if you were some real relation to Dell, and am doubly glad to have you for a cousin."

"I hope we shall be cousins indeed," replied Tessy Beaumanoir.

CHAPTER III.

A LITTLE OF MANY THINGS.

MRS. BEAUMANOIR found that Mrs. Longwort tea had fairly launched her in the "swim." S had not meant to be very gay, but to have a quiet tin devoting herself to her husband and planning out th future life, the aspects of which had been changed the ownership of Sherburne House.

"I do wonder if Lyndell ought to have been uph in her resolve," she said more than once to Leona "It seems such a sacrifice."

"Yet, if she did not really want to live there? H estly, I think Bertram Carew is more to her than Sh burne House could ever be. Would it be right for l to give up the joy of love and being loved? Answer that, little woman! Would it make amends to you?'

"No, it would not;" with tender blushes.

"I'm not so obstinately pig-headed or conceited a once was——"

"Oh, Leonard!" with a distressed accent, lifting soft eyes.

"Well—I have come to have a better understandi of my cousin. That first night I was almost struck w remorse for having ever desired the place. I seem mean and unworthy to myself, for having coveted it, a having ever desired to marry her. It was almost a pu ishment. But when you look at it from a practi

point of view, there could be no tenant who would give it the care it ought to have. Aunt Julia and Uncle Stanwood, I suppose, would have come, but, as Dell says, they had a right to their own lives. It would cost Dell a good deal to keep it up—indeed, I know of a surety that Dell would not have married in Aunt Aurelia's life-time, and poor auntie would hardly have felt free to live out all her days. It would break one's heart to see a fine old home like that go to decay, as many of our Southern homes have. And, say what we will, Dell has never taken root firmly there."

"But she loves it. She is proud of it."

"And if you could imagine her marrying Spencer Kirby, she would have grown into a Virginian woman."

"Mr. Kirby is a fine, sensible fellow," protested Tessy.

"And he was once very much gone on my fair cousin in a hopeless sort of way. Dell has an odd fashion of making friends out of her lovers. I dare say if she met that Baron Zahn, with whom she had such an episode, they would be fast friends. I don't know how much we control our own lives, but we do get turned into strange paths. I gave up every thought of Sherburne House, and now it seems to me that I took the very step of all others that accomplished the end. You appear to have been the fairy godmother of the place."

"Oh, Leonard!" with a charming smile.

"Perhaps I had a presentiment." He laughed mischievously. "My persistence stood me in good stead, you must confess."

"But you couldn't have dreamed of such a thing."

"No. And I am glad we were engaged hard and fast, and a wedding day set before it was broached to any-

body. But we owe it half to Bert Carew. And now all that remains is to live worthy of the master of Sherburne House. When your tender soul is tempted with misgivings, remember that it gave to Lyndell the freedom to seek her own happiness."

That was true. And in her inmost soul Tessy Beaumanoir knew Dell would always have kept up a secret rebellion against the limitations of that narrower life.

They went down to Beaumanoir for the Christmas feast, taking Archie, as Major and Mrs. Stanwood were to come up. Edward, Fanny, and Cecil were the young people now. Christmas wishes had come from Violet and her husband, who were still wandering among the treasures of the Old World. The Carews joined the family party as well, as Bertram would be Dell's shadow.

And now the son's wife was truly a daughter of the house. It would have been a bitter prejudice indeed that could have withstood her unaffected sweetness.

Alice Osborne had written to claim Dell's promise of the visit more than once deferred. She had settled to a year's engagement as the shortest period.

"So you had better improve your time," Bertram said, with a kind of humorous smile. "For when I have you once chained to my side, I am afraid I shall be a very exigent husband. Of course you will come up to New York. The Murrays are all longing for you."

"But I ought to devote the year to Aunt Aurelia," Dell returned thoughtfully.

"I don't see where you are to put in everybody."

"You are very good," she said, with a touch of tender remorse. "It would take a lifetime to put in everybody," laughingly.

"While you are here my father has a bit of you every day. You are such a pleasure to him, Dell."

"I ought to pay him for his goodness to me. I shouldn't have been worthy of you but for his training," and she glanced up with soft lights in her eyes.

Bertram smiled. "It may be an excellent thing to have a wife trained to your hand, and then it may be a very bad case of father-in-law. Do they ever make trouble?" humorously.

"At least they do not seem to be food for satire."

To have them all in his house, sometime, was a vague dream of the son and lover. How would it ever be compassed? But the wife he could have. There was not much selfishness in his large nature. She was not done yet with her young girl life, that somehow seemed to have many breaks in it.

Tessy was persuaded to spend a few days at Sherburne House on Leonard's proposing to come for another visit at New Year. Dell wanted to lay some plans before him and induct him into a certain proprietorship.

"I'll comfort Tessy for your absence," she promised.

"And who will comfort me?" in humorous despair. "The charms of solitude?"

"I have heard that hard work is an excellent panacea. You must go in training for a future judgeship."

"Or an M. C.," laughingly. "When you roused my ambition you awoke a dozing lion."

Between Dell and Millicent they kept Tessy well entertained. Then Fanny and Dell went up to spend a fortnight with Mrs. Longworth. Fanny was quite a modern society girl. She had the brightness and chaff of the day at her tongue's end, and though she was only medium in size, where she had hoped to be tall, and fell far short

of the beauty of either of her sisters, she knew how to make the best of herself, and she was troubled with few conscientious scruples. Pleasure and admiration were her chief desires.

Mrs. Longworth took up her cousin Archie. A young lieutenant was quite a card, and though she had to admit he could not compare with Leonard, she found him useful in the same manner in which she had demanded the elder cousin's attention last winter. There could be no gossip about these relatives.

What a whirl it was! From this time on until Lent there would be no cessation. Tessy was proud to have her husband so admired, and everything had a delightful newness to her. You met many charming people, and in a certain way you did not need to be so on guard. To be sure there was the old circle, the *crémé* of stationary society that were never swept away by the changes of election and office, and who still retained a certain authority. But so many were merely birds of passage. You enjoyed them or frowned on them, which they did not seem to heed a bit, and then they went their way, and the Washington winter was like a London season, or a few weeks in Paris, something to talk about with remembered delight.

Morna Murray came for a few weeks. Washington really was a paradise of young people that winter, for the lady at the head of the nation was young and charming, and had the friendly exuberance that goes with youth before the real cares of life begin and experience presents its graver aspects.

Archie had known occasional waves of gayety, and been singled out for ladies' favors. He was a fine dancer and passionately fond of it, and Ethel was delighted

with this accomplishment. It had bored Leonard to dance set after set.

"But you must be careful, Archie, and not lose your head unless it is to some heiress," counseled Ethel. "You couldn't afford to be saddled with a hopeless engagement."

"I don't know why it should be hopeless, if both parties were in love," was the quick reply.

"That sounds extremely young," laughed Ethel rather sarcastically. "You will be in love half a dozen times before you are thirty, and come to your right mind."

"Once will be enough for me," rather dryly.

"Then wait. If you mean to take it hard, let it not be until you have reached the years of discretion."

"I will wait until I see some prospect of support."

"Sensible. Keep to that. You will be more likely to meet the heiress."

Archie was in a certain fashion captivated with his cousin, but he detested this hard side of her nature.

"Was she ever really in love?" he asked once of Dell. "For somehow I can't believe her heart is centered in Mr. Longworth. I should be miserable to have a wife who cared so little for me individually, and so much for my money and position."

"They were having an avalanche of misfortunes when she accepted Mr. Longworth," said Dell evasively. "Uncle Lepage was a hopeless invalid, and their fortune had been swept away by some bad investments. Don't judge her uncharitably."

"Why, she is delightful in many respects. But she doesn't even pretend to be in love with Mr. Longworth."

"Perhaps he had his love dream earlier in life and

doesn't miss it. Then some women are not dependent upon love."

No, Ethel had never been really in love with her count.

"Tessy is my ideal wife. She isn't foolish either. And its funny how Len defers to her. What big eyes girls still make at him; I dare say they envy her."

"I know they do," laughed Lyndell.

Miss Morna Murray flashed like a sunbeam across society's sky. While Mrs. Longworth was resolving to be a little formal, pleading her many engagements, the young girl was fairly besieged. Leonard enjoyed it amazingly. He had felt the little pretense was half jealousy, and for once Mrs. Longworth missed her aim. Mrs. Beaumanoir's prestige was sufficient for her sister.

Lyndell returned to New York with Morna, who was going abroad with a friend and her daughter, with Mrs. Fanshawe for companion. They were to go to Spain and the shores of the Mediterranean, and take Switzerland, Germany, and England later on.

Morna was full of a girl's eager delight. She enjoyed everything with so much zest. The little mother sighed over her.

"She's so different from Tessy," said Mrs. Murray. "It seems as if she could never get her fill of pleasure. Still her head isn't turned by the admiration, and she doesn't seem to care for the fellows that throng about her. She doesn't really try for them, but they come and come. And I do hope she'll get as good a husband as Tessy. But it's an old saying that you may go through the woods and pick up a crooked stick at last."

"I think Morna's will be straight and true," Dell said, with a smile.

Morna could hardly be called a coquette. But she was so bright and winsome, so ready for enjoyment, and so ready also to give of her best. Her smiles were radiant, her laugh infectious, and her voice rippled like a bird's song. She was devoted to her mother, though she teased her in dozens of pretty ways.

"We have known Mrs. Langford several years," explained Mrs. Murray. "It began when her husband died and there was a great estate all tangled up with difficulties. Mr. Murray was building for him, and she took such a fancy to him in her sorrow and trouble. There was a young son going to the bad as fast as he could. Oh, Dell, dear, I wonder if I'm grateful enough that our boys haven't taken up evil courses? Well, the young fellow died, and one daughter married Mr. Cranston's son,—that's Con's partner, you know,—and a happy couple they are. Con and Mr. Cranston managed to get things straight, and Mrs. Langford's that grateful! I used to feel a little shy of her at first, she was such a lady, but bitter sorrow often makes friends. And now they are very prosperous. I'll trust Morna anywhere with them, and Mrs. Fanshawe is so good and wise where young girls are concerned. Tessy had her journey over the sea, and Morna's wild to go."

She wanted to see and to know things for herself, this Morna Murray. She still had the girl's heart of fifteen, with bits of garnered wisdom that often startled her mother; sweetness, quite as sweet as the elder sister, cropping out through the fun. And then she could be haughty enough for a princess, and naughty enough for an elf or brownie.

She teased the boys and was proud of them, but Tessy always took an interest in their pursuits. Her letters

were such treasures to them that they didn't so much mind her being married, only they couldn't just see why she had not chosen to stay in New York, so they could drop in and take luncheon with her.

"You're sure Mr. Beaumanoir makes her happy," Mrs. Murray said anxiously. "For it's queer, but people who love do not always make each other happy. I've noticed that. You see a great many things you never thought of, when your babies are grown and you have time to look around."

"You saw a great many things before," returned Dell, with a little laugh, "back there in the old house on the corner. I never see an apple tree in bloom, but I think of that. And your sweet nature, and hopefulness, and generous love set little slips in my soul, as one does geraniums in a garden. Some of them rooted a long while afterward. It used to vex me when someone would say I was like Aunt Aurelia, but I found I did have more than one Sherburne trait, and they were not all lovely ones either. But, you see, I couldn't allow Aunt Aurelia to outgrow me in grace, even if she was so much older. So I kept nursing the heart's-ease and all manner of sweet herbs to make my soul fragrant. I've found it takes a good deal of cultivation."

"Yes, dear," with a soft sigh of experience.

The mother was never tired of hearing what Tessy was doing, and how proud her husband was of taking her out, and fond also of staying at home and reading to her, or singing with her.

And that some time she would go and live at Sherburne House seemed quite too much.

"I'm not clear in my mind that you ought to have done it, Dell. When I think of your poor mamma, and

how anxious she was, and all the dreadful trouble about your going there, and that Tessy who never had to move a finger should come in and take it all! But Dr. Carew just smiles over it, and declares you gave it up for love of him."

"I think I did, mostly." Dell laughed, and blushed.

"So that you are happy"—and she studied the bright face, quite convinced.

"Happiness is your grand reward for everything," rejoined Dell.

"It's such a good and lovely thing, dear. And there might be so much more of it, if people would only try."

Lyndell was thinking she had her full share.

Her lover dropped in for a half hour's chat as he could steal time from his patients. And there were such delightful evenings, when they were enraptured with music. She was in time for the Wagner operas, many of which she had missed in an earlier winter. And in a great city there were so many subjects of interest to these two, mapping out their lives for their fellow-creatures as well as themselves.

Morna and her friends started one day in February, the worst month in the year everyone said, but they went safely with only one storm, and that not very severe.

And now if Dell really meant to take her journey to the Western Coast, Mr. Murray had some business to call him to San Francisco.

"I shall never want to spare you for so long a time afterward, when we take up the real business of life," Bertram said, with a longing smile that indicated how much he hated to spare her anyway. But he had promised her the year.

"If we could take it afterward," Dell suggested wistfully.

"My dear girl, we shall take it then for ourselves. It won't be your visit to Alice and Lady Ashton and Gifford. And some time, when I have earned a good long holiday, we will go abroad. When I think of all the richness of life—and love, I almost tremble."

How many times the cloud that had blighted his aunt's life had crossed his mind; and there had been his father's short-lived happiness. But on the other hand, the Beaumanoir household had been spared to each other. It was in God's hands—all the issues of life were. He had felt that among the great mysteries of his profession. But they were both young and well and strong.

Aunt Aurelia said Dell must go. She and Cousin Eliza were very well, and there were plenty of servants. Millicent was over every day or two, and Tessy and Leonard ran down frequently. Alice was very exigent, and Dell must see her lovely boy, that was her joy and delight.

"I didn't know but we would stop at Milly's little girl," said Aunt Aurelia, with a rather humorous grimness.

She was a great pet with grandpa, this quaint Nora von Lindorm, with her yellow hair and eyes of German blue, and a wonderful favorite with the old ladies at Sherburne House. Millicent kept busy and interested as new fields of thought opened before her and new friends entered her circle. It was so delightful to know she had the power of touching other hearts, of drawing stranger sympathies in unison with her own. Leonard was very proud of her success. Cecil thought it as wonderful a thing that she could write about people she had never seen, as Cousin Eliza had at first considered it.

As her own life widened inwardly, she let it flow outward as well. The richness was not all for herself. She

was to bless her little circle with the gifts of that higher genius, a love that understood human wants and needs.

"If you would only go," Dell besought wistfully. "Milly, why can't you? It would be so delightful."

"I did think a little of it at first. But I fear we would both feel that Aunt Aurelia needed one or the other of us at hand in case of indisposition or loneliness. Do you know I am counting on the time when Tessy and Leonard will be here as a general thing. And, suppose Tessy was a society woman, with her soul immersed in gayeties? I believe a watchful Providence must have guided Leonard's choice. Every day we see the wisdom of it."

"I am glad, nay, thankful, you feel so." Dell's face was one glow of satisfaction, and she pressed her arms fondly about Millicent.

"We come to see the wisdom of a good many rather mysterious dealings. They are planning to move down for the summer. Ned is to go in the office in May. Oh, have you heard that Archie is likely to be sent West? I believe he doesn't want to go very much, but Ethel seems to think he is rather entangled with a girl that he would be better off without. That is Fanny's gossip, and may be wide of the real truth. But it seems he has developed into quite a society young man."

Dell prepared for her journey with a rather divided interest. Aunt Julia came up for a few days, and Archie ran down to spend Sunday with her. He had improved a good deal, Dell thought. He had a certain easy grace and charm, born of his winter's experience; he was much more ready and fluent in conversation.

"But I haven't much of a fancy for Western wilds," he said to his mother. "I am more strongly attracted by the amenities of civilization."

"Still, you are to endure hardness as a good soldier. I am afraid Washington gayeties have proved too much for you;" and she studied the boyish face that flushed under her scrutiny. He was curiously younger than his years.

"The winter has been delightful. You meet everybody worth knowing at Cousin Ethel's. In one way she seems to live just for other people. It isn't sacrifice of self, however. Indeed, she is quite a study. I find humanity in general very entertaining."

His mother smiled at the assumption of mannish experience. How many anxious moments she had devoted to him, remembering how his cousin Gifford had gone astray. But the clear complexion and bright eyes, albeit a little tired-looking, did not suggest dissipation. Surely she could trust him. And Ethel's affiliations were of the highest order.

There would be temptations out at a military post as well. But one couldn't keep sons forever under one's wing.

"Dear mother," he said, in a tender tone, "don't feel over-anxious about me. I have kept all my promises to you; I think you may trust me for the future. I have come to despise certain phases of life that prove a snare to many; I have no desire to rush to destruction. Life is too interesting to me."

CHAPTER IV.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WORLD.

FLYING across the continent in a palace car with the friend who had been her early father, and now proved himself an entertaining traveling companion, his pleasant knowledge making the way bright with a kind of mental sunshine, Lyndell Sherburne kept chiding herself because her interest would wander back to the delicious experiences of the past two months.

"I *am* selfish," she said to herself, with a kind of mental shake. "Is this best of all love going to dominate me so completely that other friends will grow tame and tiresome? Bertram can forget almost everything in the work of his life—*almost*," and she flushed unconsciously. "But he never *did* forget me it seems, not even when——" and the flush deepened. "I do wonder if he would have turned to Millicent presently, if there had been no hope."

There was a little jealous pang—she was shamed by it. Would Millicent be happy in her own rather limited sphere? But oh, she did have her genius! She lived through these exquisite lives she created. She loved and suffered and hoped and endured. Dell had seen it in her face, when she had been deeply engrossed. And there was her charming little Nora growing in quaint wisdom and saying such wonderfully pretty things.

Presently there would be children everywhere, hosts of them at Sherburne House, she hoped. The work

kept widening out. It was not all for one person. And she must not make her happiness cover and shadow other lives and set them in the shade.

Why, how interested she had been in Alice's romance, that had come about almost like a miracle! How she had counted on this visit, and now when the way had been made easy she hardly cared to go.

It was pure selfishness. She must strive against it. For she would not be allowed to revolve around Bertram. She felt rather than understood it.

"Are you homesick, grave brown eyes?" asked a solicitous voice.

Dell looked up and smiled. That was the girl's face Mr. Murray enjoyed seeing.

"I have been thinking too much of 'the folks I left behind me,' and not enough of those I am going to," she said, in an earnest tone. "And now that I am more than halfway there I must turn my attention to them."

When she really roused herself she found many things to claim her consideration. She had been going over them in a perfunctory way, with the thought of how much she had seen, and amazed now that she had been almost bored. But they were coming to the grandeur of nature, the infinite spaces of the world as God had left it, before man undertook to reduce it to his convenient business level. The towns and cities were his achievements, but these mountains of the everlasting, these long sweeps, these weird ravines, the touches of magnificence on every hand, were the work of a Master Mind. Lyndell was roused to her utmost. There was no more listless dreaming. Mr. Murray thought he had seen much of it through Con's eyes and in his vivid letters, but to each one's experience it seems as if the half had not been told.

It was evening when they ran into the station of that wonderful Western city whose story has been a romance from the beginning. Dell kept her seat while the eager crowd surged out, and faces peered in the windows like troops of shadows.

"I will go out and see if anyone is here," Mr. Murray said. "Don't stir, and I shall know you will not be swept away by the flood."

He had barely reached the platform when someone grasped his arm, a bright, cordial young fellow, grown out of remembrance.

"Here they are," he cried. "At least, finding Mr. Murray inspires me to believe that Dell is not far off. This is Mr. Osborne."

Gifford in his haste pushed by and glanced down the aisle. Dell half rose with a cry of delight.

"Oh," he exclaimed, "you are not a bit changed! Dell, my dear, dear cousin! No words can do justice to my longing for you. We have all been wild. Lady Ashton is at the hotel. Of course we can't get out to-night—the train is an hour late. But since we are sure of you, we can wait for the rest—since, indeed, it is Alice who must do the waiting;" and he laughed, with a touch of satisfaction.

"But you have changed very much. I suppose I should have known you," doubtfully.

The slim figure had filled out to robustness. The sun and wind and much out-of-doors life had banished the boyish fairness. There was an assured strength to his voice, a gladness good to hear.

Mr. Osborne came to add his welcome. They would all escort Dell to the hotel where Lady Ashton awaited her. Had she any idea how extravagantly delighted they were to get her at last?

And she had been really ungrateful for all the love and desire. Was there so much love in her life that she needed to pick out only the choicest bits?

Being whirled along in the cab was no new experience. She and Gifford had it to themselves; the elder men stayed behind to look after the luggage, and Mr. Murray much preferred the walk, after the long journey.

Lady Ashton clasped the young girl to her heart with fond affection. She still envied the mothers of young girls. Being an aunt had not brought her much satisfaction, though there was a vague prospect of two of the younger Trenholme girls coming out to them. But Alice was like an own daughter to them, and they had already insisted upon being grandparents.

Lady Ashton had been taking off her wraps and hovering about Dell with indescribable tenderness. Gifford looked on with a certain jealousy.

"Dell, do you know that you have grown more beautiful in the two years. Though it seems ten to me."

Lyndell colored warmly.

"I suppose there was room for improvement," she returned, with a gay laugh. "I believe I was very unpromising when I first went to Sherburne House. And after that long illness! And everybody was so lovely! I remember that I almost died with envy. Milly, Violet, Ethel and Alice—and Florence, I think, will distance all the others."

"But you always had beautiful eyes."

"Except when a thundergust of temper swept over them," Dell rejoined.

"I can't imagine such a thing," commented Lady Ashton. "I am sure the first sight of you convinced me of a self-control remarkable in such a young girl. Do

you remember that scene at the White Mountains, and Mme. Lavoisier? And it is one of the most delightful events of my life that I should have brought you your good news."

She kissed her fondly.

How long ago that seemed. "How many strange things there are in life," she said retrospectively. "At least my life has been just a series of events."

"And some splendid ones. Oh, Dell! if you had never been put in the world a great deal would be missed out of it."

"But you wouldn't have known." she said archly. "And once I wished I could go out of it. I seemed such a misfit."

"There's so much to talk about," interrupted Lady Ashton, who for a moment had been oblivious of their voices. "We can't go to dinner until the others come. Sit down here," drawing her to the sofa. "And that darling Tessy Murray married her own true love. Is Mr. Beaumanoir going to be the one man out of all the world for her?"

"We were amazed," began Gifford. "I can't imagine Len ever forgetting his big, handsome, complacent self for any woman."

"It was a tremendous case of love," returned Dell smilingly. "No, I wouldn't have predicted it of Leonard, and it seems to me the most splendid impulse of his life."

"If she can hold him. She is sweet and charming, and if he ever neglects her, some dreadful punishment ought to overtake him. When he comes to fill some important position—for Len is the kind of person that good things gravitate to naturally, won't she have to stand a little one side——"

"Tessy will grow with him. Dear Mamma Murray has grown with her husband and her boys. Why, she knows almost as much as James and Lawrence, and is their confidante. It seems oddly funny. Three great big boys adoring such a little woman! They choose her gowns—at least James does, and he has excellent taste. And Con brings her something from every journey, and tells her about the country and the people. She has never really studied since she was twelve years old, and I don't think she would know how, but she is very intelligent and well informed."

"She is an unusual woman," remarked Lady Ashton. "If there were more like her the prosperity of the world would not be so often set at nought."

"Still, Len's marriage surprises me," persisted Gifford.

"It surprised us all. But Len had some old-fashioned notions about a wife, and one was that she should not stumble over the 'obey' in the marriage service," said Dell mirthfully.

"And have Katharine's pretty speech to her erring sisters at her tongue's end:

> "'Fie, fie, unknit that threatening unkind brow,
> Wound not thy lord, thy governor.'"

Dell really laughed then, and so did the elder lady, but she added:

"Tessy's conscience will never be exclusively given over to her husband. He will not be a god to her. Gifford, you do not know how he has improved."

"It must have begun long before in a small way, or he couldn't have fallen in love with such a girl."

The gentlemen entered and they made ready to go to

dinner, with the prospect of a good long chatty evening, only, Mr. Osborne declared, he should be conscience-smitten if Dell did not remember every word to repeat to Alice.

Letters had been exchanged, to be sure, but they were nothing compared to this brilliant, humorous *raconteur*. One skipped so many things in letters, or saved them until next time, that elusive period near at hand, yet never reaching us. And though they all knew Dell's chief reason for giving up Sherburne House,—she had confessed that to Alice,—she made no mention of it now.

It was a brightly happy evening, and midnight came before they separated, Lady Ashton declaring in remorse that they ought to have more kindliness than to keep Dell up so after her long journey.

"And now we must not say a word, but address ourselves at once to our slumbers," she said, with a fond kiss.

There was still a long journey, with two considerable stops, but it seemed to Lyndell all Europe had nothing more magnificent to show in variety and wealth of beauty. They came in sight of the ocean, and skirted Monterey Bay in its matchless loveliness, then took a sudden plunge through a wild, mountainous region, where great peaks reared their heads on one side, and on the other little towns with wide expanses, where future towns and cities were yet to be called into existence by man's indomitable will and industry.

Dell was silent from sheer surprise. The picturesque and *bizarre* effects, the ancient adobe buildings, with their tile roofs and crumbling walls, suggested the romance of long-ago ruined cities. Great vales and thickets of distorted cypresses in grotesque forms, then

groups of slender, quaint pines, and, oh, such tangles of bloom! Presently a sharp contrast of arid waste stretching out to the interior.

Horses for the gentlemen, and a carriage for the ladies, awaited them. Mr. Murray decided to bear the latter company. The small ponies trotted up briskly, but the evening shades began to settle about them, and a young crescent moon shone out in the wonderful sky before the ride ended.

"You have come to something new, Miss Dell," exclaimed Gifford, as he helped her out. "You have never been on a ranch before."

Two soft arms were about her neck, and a cry of joy greeted her.

"It is a long, long while, so long, I thought we never should see you," cried Alice, in a voice broken by exquisite delight, near to a sob.

She was so glad to find herself here. She understood the real duty relatives and friends owed each other, if they wanted to keep the sacred fire of love burning.

"It seems too good to be true. Can you imagine how desperately we were disappointed when you did not come out with Tessy? And now I am glad, for it gives me two visits instead of one."

If they called the rooms at Sherburne House large, what was this! Dell could hardly look down to the end, where two hammocks were slung across the corners. There was a great round table, large enough for Arthur's knights, in a litter of papers, books, and magazines, that would have delighted Dr. Carew's heart. A large lamp, with a soft yellow shade, fluted and ruffled, made a sunny light, and set the opposite end of the room at a still farther distance. The piano seemed to break the

distance, and there were flute and violin, the bow hanging over the corner of the music rack ; two great lounges, full of cushions, easy-chairs in willow and rattan, and a cosy corner, with an easel half fencing it off.

It was unlike, and yet it recalled her visit to Millicent in that far German valley, reaching it just at twilight, when the lamps were lighted. The lamp up this side was in pale rose color. Altogether, it was a lovely interior.

"You must be tired to death, and dusty, and here is your room all ready for you. And starved, as well."

"Oh, no, not starved, with three men anxious to provide food for you ! Oh, Alice, what a charming room !"

It seemed all in white, with here and there a cool contrast in soft grayish green—such an abundance of flowers as bade her welcome from table and nook.

"Gifford would have it all arranged over. I wanted blue. Do you know he has an artistic eye ?"

"It is cool and restful." She felt at home in a moment.

"And agrees with flowers in color and number. This is my room. I had blue last year, and Bevis insisted on pansy colors, as he calls them. I tried to keep baby awake, but it was past his time. Here he is."

She turned aside the net. A large fair child, sleeping peacefully, his rosy lips half parted, and his cheeks flushed with a delicious pink. Dell stooped to kiss him. No need to ask if Alice was happy. She seemed still in the very bloom of girlhood.

They sat a long while over the supper, recalling the reminiscences of Trenholme Court, and how Bevis Osborne had come down to hear about the wonderful El Dorado, where you could plant a little money and have

it grow and bear fruit while you slept, and then gone round the world for his wife.

Even Colonel Ashton seemed to have renewed his youth, except that he was growing more bald.

"The folks at home have such a queer idea of us," he said laughingly. "I can't understand it. And it vexes my sister mightily. They seem to think America has barely emerged from the wilds, and that we are still in danger of being scalped or burned in our log huts. Lady Trenholme used to be in such a worry about Lucy,"—glancing at his wife,—"and was always asking if she was 'comfortable.' And that, after she had been in India!"

"I call it luxury," returned Dell. "It is odd how we look at other's lives and color them with our own thoughts. Half the time we are wrong."

"The most curious feature in it is the objection to being set right," returned the colonel. "How much obstinacy there is at the bottom of human nature! We often take the reason of Beatrice, though we can't plead being a woman. We think it so because we think it so?"

"We kept Dell up until midnight last night," said Lady Ashton, as they rose from the table, "and it is past nine now. Perhaps she will give us a solemn vow and promise that she will not fly away to-night, if we send her to bed. She must be longing for real rest."

Lyndell admitted that she was tired; Alice was very solicitous for her cousin's comfort. The roomy bed, the quiet and the fragrant air were so restful after the continual tumult and stir and change of travel. It was a thing to give thanks for. She even slept late the next morning.

A wide expanse of field and sky greeted her as she glanced out of her window—as far south as the eye could reach, but to the east and north it was broken by hills and terraces, and the misty blue of distant mountains. There was a curious breadth and infinitude about it.

"I am going to have you to myself to-day," announced Alice, as she entered the room. "I would not have you disturbed. The men have taken Mr. Murray out to see the country. They have planned so many things, and he thinks he can only give us a week. He has to go up to Portland, it seems, on business, and will take the Northern Pacific."

"Yes," answered Lyndell; "he came this way mostly for me, though he is ready to take glimpses of any part of the world. If Mamma Murray loved to travel, they would go about a good deal. She is waiting until the children are grown, and then there will be grandchildren, and she will have her hands full visiting them. I never saw anyone so fond of babies, and I do hope there will be a crowd of them at Sherburne House."

"It was a beautiful romance. I suppose Sherburne House reconciled everybody, even mamma and Ethel."

"I am afraid Ethel still thinks it a mistake. But Tessy has made some delightful friends in Washington, and Leonard is very proud of her."

"Miss Ashton wanted to take her abroad again, and she could have captured a very charming man who owns no end of property in San José, where she might have lived like a little queen. Oh, she wouldn't have gone begging!" laughed Alice. "But you must have some breakfast."

The small table was a picture in itself, with fruit and flowers. A neat Chinese waiter brought in the coffee and biscuits, and then the two went on chatting.

"Baby has gone out for his airing. He is an early riser, and by eleven is ready for a nap. Grandmamma takes a book and goes out with him. Do you knew that half the time I say Mamma Ashton! The colonel insisted they should be grandparents. Oh, do you not think children are unevenly divided? Here are two people who would have delighted in a large family. Lady Ashton insists that if they had come to a settled home earlier in life, they would have adopted some. English motherhood is lovely, I think—though I do not see why all motherhood is not a blessed thing. But because their home came too late, you see I have the joy of it. Oh, Dell, what if I *had* made a mistake."

Even now Alice shuddered at the thought.

"You were not allowed to. God had this in keeping for you."

"Dell, now that I know more of the world and of men,—at least now that judgment enables me to apply my experience,—I cannot believe Vincent Phillips meant to marry me. He is a gay young bachelor still, his English engagement having come to grief. And fancy mamma's disappointment and Ethel's chagrin. My relief would have over-balanced any mortification," and she smiled. "Do you think Ethel happy?"

"She seems very well satisfied at present. She has all she wants, and a great deal of admiration."

"And poor mamma? Is she really ill? I wrote for her to come out here, and she was as bad as the English. She couldn't think of taking hardships in her state of health. She needed a warm house, and a bath, and a maid, and a carriage, and some social life. A ranch was a wilderness to her."

"I do not think her at all serious," returned Dell

dryly. "She gets out to the theater, and an occasional reception. She has some sympathetic friends. Nerves are fashionable among a certain set. I smile when I think how dreadfully afraid of her I once felt."

"You were afraid of us all. It was cruel."

"But I have had wonderful accessions of courage since that day," and Dell laughed with intense amusement.

"Do you suppose she really thinks I suffer for anything?" and Alice colored almost painfully.

"My dear, she is fond of a grievance. Harry is doing so well, Gifford prospering, and Florence growing handsome by the hour, so she can only sigh over you. None of us consider you on the verge of want;" mirthfully.

"The life is very different. And there are so many splendid places to visit where you meet charming people. We have had some quite superior visitors"—her fair face lighting up with amusement. "There have been several titled Englishmen, who paid Lady Ashton no end of deference. And, really, there are times when I enjoy having a title in the family. It is funny to see free and enlightened Americans so caught by it. She wanted to relinquish it, but grandpa was not willing. He always says 'my lady,' with such a pretty loving air."

"It suits her," returned Dell. "I couldn't endure plain Mrs. Ashton."

The baby and the pretty grandmamma returned in charge of another Chinese domestic. It was quite warm now, but there was a beautiful grove of trees to temper the sunshine.

The baby had his father's name, with the addition of Ashton. He was a merry, rollicking little fellow, and

could make his way across the floor in a queer, sidewise manner. Occasionally he climbed up by a chair. He talked, too, in an unknown tongue and most hilarious fashion. Lyndell found that he loved to romp, and they had a hearty play. She had not lost her love for children, though the babies were all growing up.

Ah Lung carried him away presently. There was still so much to say about relatives and old friends. No one else could have brought such a bright budget of confidences. No other cousin could have entered so wholly into Alice's past life, or so accepted her present.

And Dell found the best of fortunes had attended the colonel's and Mr. Osborne's undertaking. They had added flocks and herds and vineyards. But the most profitable of all schemes had been a method of irrigation and cultivation that was likely to have a widespread application, and turn arid wildernesses into desirable possessions.

"So we seem likely to make our fortunes in this new world, though we did not start very early in life," said Lady Ashton. "And while we talk of making a visit to the old place, I could never be content to live there. There is something inspiriting in the very boundlessness here, and as for beauty, one cannot go amiss of it. The Lord did not put it all in one place;" and she smiled with satisfaction.

Dell unpacked her trunk and wrote some letters.

"Do you ride still?" asked Alice.

"Why, yes!" glancing up in surprise.

"Then let us go for a little outing. I will order up the horses. We can stop and post your letters, and no doubt there are some awaiting us. The men will not be home before nine."

"I brought my habit, as you charged me to. A ride will be delightful!"

"We ride so continually, I am a famous horsewoman."

The sun was dropping down the Pacific line. Was she indeed out here, the other side of the world? Dell asked herself. What a magnificent sight the vague broken coast range presented. Dark, heavily wooded slopes, great rounded outlines, brown and bare, others black, indeed, with the blue and purple shadows more dense in the recesses. Soft winds from odorous pines, and perhaps jungle wilds of India, or Araby the blest, wafted over the broad ocean. One could only look and breathe.

"Ah, here is a letter for you," said Alice, as the boy came out with them, and Dell's quick blush betrayed the writer.

CHAPTER V.

MOONLIGHT AND A SURPRISE.

"IT is like a pastoral," Lyndell Sherburne said. She was pillowed in one of the hammocks, and had been reading aloud from a volume of poetry someone had compiled about the wide, strange, silent, mysterious West, with its suggestions of long-gone ages when the great trees were in their childhood; when a nation of whom history knew little built their homes and lived their lives, leaving only a few puzzling secrets to torment the later savant.

The trees outside made a softened light, and now and then a bird or butterfly dazzled across the room and danced into the unknown.

"Do you know what it suggests to me? The old, old times of Abraham, sitting at the tent door, and looking over the wide plains of Mamre."

"You do not suppose history will repeat itself, do you?" asked Lady Ashton, in a tone of humorous consternation. "For beyond the plain lay Sodom and Gomorrah."

"I had not gone as far as that, I was only thinking of the peace and ease and prosperity. And I suppose Sarah embroidered—the Eastern women all did," and she smiled over to Alice, who was embroidering violets and buttercups on a table cover. "And there were the flocks and herds, the long lines of tents, the serving men and

women from the nations round about. He was a hundred, and yet life had not really begun with him. The visit of the angels was to change everything. After that he lived several new lives, so different from the first hundred years."

"Some others of us do, even if it doesn't take a hundred years. I sometimes wonder if I have been a soldier's wife out in India, anxious and perplexed and facing widowhood. And now all is peace. The latter days are better than the first. I won't say happier, for I had a good deal of joy with it all, and there is a zest to the cup of youth one never quite tastes afterward."

"I am afraid I should grow indolent and ease-loving," appended Dell, with a smile. "There seems so little to do, so much rest and enjoyment."

She was wondering if Alice would be satisfied with it as the years went on.

"Dell, do you remember Elim, with the seventy trees of palm?" asked Lady Ashton. "All they had to do in this world was to keep on growing. Now and then some weary traveler found the shade grateful and refreshing, but it wasn't every day or every week. Still, the trees knew their business."

"To keep straight on where they were set," laughed Dell. "But some people are not really *set* anywhere. Think of all the things that have happened to me. A little girl in England with a sorrowing mother, so sharply transplanted that I might have forgotten about the first garden, but for her letter. And then torn up by the roots and set in Sherburne House, whisked off here and there, at school, across the ocean to new relatives, and then trying to take root in my father's house. I *did* try. I shall always be glad I made the endeavor. And yet——"

"Oh, Dell! it was such a great thing to give up," exclaimed Alice half regretfully.

"Don't you remember you were offered a home there? I had some girlish romances about it. I used to think if Millicent would come some time, and we could get lovely, homeless young girls and make a little circle of our own. I am very fond of people—crowds of them. Then my duty was obviously to Aunt Aurelia, and she took you in——"

"And you were not a bit jealous! It was splendid of you, Dell!" with deep feeling.

She had never been really jealous but once in her life, the young girl remembered.

"I wanted a sister, someone of my own. You cannot tell—no one can tell, the loneliness of an only child!" and Dell's face was suffused with a mysterious longing.

"Except the loneliness of the mother who loves and wants children, when they are not," interposed Lady Ashton. "And God has made me a joyful mother of children who are no kin to me. But having them, I never shall let them go. It is odd that I should have met one at Bombay and the other at the White Mountains. And I am living a pastoral with them in California."

"Your life has been full of events, also," returned Dell.

"Yes, I am quite ready for the pastoral. But it is a good thing for young people to have experiences. Most of them are better satisfied. Still, I like to think of the seventy trees that spent their lives at Elim."

"Miss Carew is one. But I wish we could get her out to California. It would be heaven realized to her. Yes, I am glad about the trees, too."

The baby crowed and laughed as he pulled himself

over the floor. When he reached grandmamma she caught him up and kissed him rapturously.

There was a stir outside, Alice sprang to "the door of the tent."

"Come, won't you and Dell go out for a gallop? I must go to Diamond Creek, and we can come back by moonlight. It will be splendid."

Alice looked rather doubtful. Her husband dismounted.

"Do you suppose grandmamma will let the boy stray off into the desert?" he exclaimed laughingly. "We have been so engrossed with Mr. Murray that I have hardly had a spare hour for you."

That was true enough. The gentlemen had been away nearly all day long, once or twice not reaching home until midnight.

"Yes," said Lady Ashton, "go. The ride is a beautiful one, Dell. Ah Lung and I could look after ten babies."

"We will find some supper over there, and make up the deficiency when we get home. Otherwise, I should have to take an early start to-morrow morning, and go alone. Gif and I planned it ten minutes ago. We must keep Dell from getting homesick."

The young girl gave a merry laugh. She was not homesick, though her ten days had seemed a month at least. It was worth the journey to have all the delightful letters, and know how everyone had missed her.

They made themselves ready. The servant brought in some fruit and cake. Colonel Ashton settled himself in an easy-chair with his pipe and papers, and baby hanging to his good knee. Alice had a dozen solicitous charges to give. At first she had hesitated about leaving him for any pleasure. He was such a wonderful, such a precious thing!

"I can't allow him to become a formidable rival," declared his father. "And I can't afford to lose the sweet young girl I crossed the seas and the continent to find."

"But I shall grow old. I have no secret of eternal youth," the pretty wife said regretfully.

"In ten years I give you leave. There may be more babies, and you must save something for them as well as for me. I want the last one to find a pretty mother, not a faded and worn woman. And I want you in all the years between."

So she had gone back to her music and her reading, and she grew curiously interested when she heard the two men discuss the strides of the Russian bear and the English lion over the Asian continent. Ghengis Khan and Tamerlane were vague memories of school days, but the colonel and Mr. Osborne had gone over the old historic ground, and, listening to them, many a hero of history lived again. There were so few demands of society in this life, that she found leisure for many things she had not thought of before. And baby slept and woke, crowed and laughed, and discovered new sources of entertainment outside of his mother's arms.

"But I shouldn't know what to do without a grandmamma," she said, with tender kisses.

Would her own mother ever have filled such a delightful place? Yet she had sons and daughters. Ah, it was not quite all in the mere fact of motherhood, there was the divine gift beside.

Only yesterday, Mr. Murray had said good-by to them and started northward, never to wonder again at Con's exuberant descriptions. The time had been so brief for all they had to crowd into it, and to-day had been full of matters pushed aside. This very

pressing demand from a stranger had been postponed for days, and impatiently insisted upon this morning.

Alice ran back for a last kiss and a last word. Osborne laughed good-humoredly, then put her on the saddle.

"I've taken Dell two miles this way," she said.

"Then we will turn into the ravine. It will be light enough."

Gifford and Dell fell a little behind.

"Do you know that I have scarcely seen you at all!" began Gifford, in an aggrieved tone.

He had developed in many respects; he was a man now, as mature for his years as he had been boyish not so long ago. He suggested several resemblances to her. Something of Leonard and Ethel, and then a curious gentleness, a withdrawing into self as if he was annoyed or hurt; a supersensitiveness.

"You will have plenty of time to make up for one week. What do you do with yourself ordinarily?"

"Do? Well, I am a sort of general factotum. Carry and fetch and run hither and thither."

"But you are happy—satisfied! That is——" A slight moodiness in the face warned her.

"I shouldn't be satisfied for a lifetime. I am glad you have come. You'll see how it is in a little while. I want someone—to talk matters over with."

He was going to say "advise me." But his pride refused to appeal to Dell.

"You do not regret that you came?"

"No. I couldn't have done a better thing then. And the gain in health and strength has been immeasurable. Then I *have* kept out of temptation's way," with a bitter accent. "When I think of that old time, and the insen-

sate idiot I was, I could beat myself! And there's Len coming up to the topmost round——"

"Oh, he hasn't gone very far up," she returned, with a comforting smile. "He is doing his best. He is going to make a much finer man than I expected."

"And you planned it so there should be no row over his marriage. You do the hard work for us;" with a touch of remorse.

"He planned it himself, Gifford; he was so manly that I almost fell in love with him;" coloring brightly. "Of course I asked all the Murrays down to my coming-of-age party;" giving a light, soft laugh. "But the matter had been already settled. And Tessy has been quite a personage in Washington, I assure you."

"She is a charming, delightful little body. Miss Ashton, you know, is wild over her for her grace and dainty refinements. How did she and Ethel hit off?"

"I wrote you about the tea?"

"Oh, yes! Did it go any farther?"

"She has taken her to drive and paid her some very pleasant attentions."

"The future mistress of Sherburne is not to be ignored. There could have been only one other——"

"Ethel is generally correct and well bred;" interrupting any personal allusion.

The two in advance paused a moment.

"End of the first chapter," said Gifford, with a frown, and an impatient movement of the shoulders.

"Now, Miss Lyndell," began Mr. Osborne, "we turn in here, and must go single file. Follow Alice, and Gifford will play rear guard—though there are no treacherous savages to surprise us. You are not tired?"

"Oh, no!" with ready gayety.

In a moment it seemed night. A curious winding ravine, left wide enough for a road by some freak of nature. Here the rocks seemed literally rent apart, and up above the jagged edges frowned across the narrow strip of visible sky. Dell held her breath for an instant, it seemed as if they must fall and crush one.

"Quite a gorge, isn't it?"

How sepulchral Osborne's voice sounded!

"You are not afraid, Dell? I thought I never could venture a second time;" and Alice glanced at her cousin, who looked vague and unreal in the twilight darkness.

Dell gave a half laugh of assurance.

Even the tramp of the horses sounded ghostly. Somewhere there was a trickle of water, with a solemn fall as if it dared not leap lightly. Ah, it was growing lighter. The chasm widened. It was still rough and threatening on the one side, but the other sloped gradually and began to show traces of vegetation in the clefts where soil had settled through the long years.

Up high the setting sun struck one point, and made a new world with a golden rose color.

"Miss Ashton spent hours trying for that," said Osborne. "So have other artists."

Down where they were was a mass of shadow of all gradations of purple-gray to black. Over their heads the ridges of rock seemed touched with a thousand indescribable tints from that one point of light. The sparse shrubs were transformed into naiad nooks. The rough brown spaces were set with jewels. Up higher still a roseate suffusion caught each peak and draped it with shadowy outlines. The one splendidly illumined spot turned to flame, wavered, flashed up with irides-

cent rays, grew paler with pinks and grays and touches of pale gold. It was the fire of the gods going out, and the travelers were left in twilight.

"Millicent ought to see it," Dell exclaimed, with a long indrawn breath.

"That was really fine! You see it a hundred different ways. Let us go on and catch the real sunset," and Osborne started his horse.

They appeared at first to plunge into a deeper darkness, a sort of cavernous space where the road widened. And when they came out they had passed one peak, and the interval was a wooded ridge. Through this and the next height shone a golden sunset that seemed to make a new day for them, rather than the beginning of night. The frowning rocks on the other hand dropped down to hills, verdure-covered, and made beautiful with the waning light that glorified every branch and shrub and ragged tree bole.

"That is only one little space," commented Osborne, "and there are hundreds of them. You always find something new. And this is rarely twice alike."

It was a ravine still. The soft lights lingered in varying beauty. But presently they emerged from it, and to the eastward were long sandy levels broken by sage brush and desert grass. Then they came upon traces of habitations, farms stretching out and fighting with nature for the right of way, the right to make two blades of grass grow where none had grown before. Long reaches of vineyards, plantations of trees.

"It suggests Italy," said Dell. "I remember Lady Ashton once saying we young Americans ought to be proud of our heritage."

"And you will be prouder when you have seen more

of it. In years to come this Pacific Coast will be the great travel resort, from San Diego Bay to Alaska."

They came in sight of a small, pretty town, that seemed literally abloom with the most gorgeous flowers. The last pink of the sunset still spread a soft haze over everything, giving it peculiar picture-like effects.

"We are at our journey's end," announced Mr. Osborne over his shoulder to Dell, and bestowing a tender smile on his wife.

"Do we come in search of diamonds, or is it a misnomer?" asked the young girl.

"Tradition says that years ago a man, prospecting for gold, found some diamonds. The bed of the stream was turned, but that seemed the end of any precious stones worth having. There was a little gold that had evidently come down from the mountains. Ten or twelve years ago, in a terrific storm, a small lake up above burst its bounds and swelled the creek to a river. Irrigation was attracting attention, and a company laid out the pretty town, and offered inducements to settlers. They have a perpetual rain-maker harnessed to their desires. The lake is evidently fed by some underground streams, and is never failing. The system is considered a splendid piece of engineering."

The fruit farms lay mostly outside, where there were rows of packing establishments, canneries, raisin-drying houses, and, nearer by, some mechanical industries. Beautiful avenues and streets intersected each other, and several fine hotels were conspicuous among the dwelling houses. There were abundant grounds blooming in riotous beauty. Great basins of calla lilies scented the air. Fuchias were like trees, and geraniums had wide spreading branches.

The Rialto was in an open square, and here our travelers stopped, being well known guests, and were given a most cordial welcome. A number of people had been enjoying the sunset from the piazza, and were now lounging in chairs and hammocks.

The two ladies were shown to a room where they made themselves as presentable as possible under the circumstances. When they came down Mr. Osborne was standing at the foot of the broad stairway, and introduced his companion to the two ladies, as Mr. Drayton. He greeted them in a very gentlemanly manner, and took Mrs. Osborne in to dinner. Gifford joined them and seated himself beside Dell, Alice and Mr. Drayton were opposite, though they had the end of the table to themselves.

"I am extremely happy to make your acquaintance, Mrs. Osborne," he declared smilingly. "I had begun to think Mr. Osborne a myth, having missed seeing him at the places where he was sure to be, said rumor. And I have been over to Osborne Grange twice. If I had only known about *you*, I should have made an appeal to your sympathy."

"It would have been heeded, though I could not have produced Mr. Osborne. He has been away so much during the last ten days," she answered courteously.

"Well, having found him at length, I give thanks. You would be surprised that I heard of him a year ago in England, where his success was spoken of with the utmost enthusiasm. And six months ago, when I had thousands of acres of wild land out here donated to me, the same friend insisted I should hunt up a Mr. Bevis Osborne. My friend, although 'from the States,' as

they say, is very sweet on a certain Miss Trenholme——"

"Not of Trenholme Court?"

It was Lyndell who spoke up suddenly, and then she flushed at the interruption.

"Yes, of Trenholme Court. He has been in business in London since his early youth, and will no doubt turn into a *bona fide* Englishman unless he emigrates to California," laughingly. "But I wonder——" And he stopped suddenly, glancing from one to the other.

"Miss Sherburne is a cousin of the Trenholmes," explained Mr. Osborne. "Then we have with us a Colonel Ashton, my partner in our undertaking, whose wife is Lady Trenholme's sister. And my admission to the family circle came by marrying Miss Sherburne's cousin."

Mr. Drayton's face was a study, first in its surprise, then its amusement.

"I wish now I had gone down to Trenholme Court," he said. "Kingsley was anxious that I should see his *fiancée*, but I am not specially interested in lovers," and he gave a rather soft, half satirical laugh. "Odd, isn't it, how things come about? Kingsley is a sort of second or third cousin of mine. After the marriage what relation shall we be, Miss Sherburne? May I ask whether you are English or American?"

The bright color of half embarrassment suffused Dell's face as she glanced up.

"I think I am most American," she answered proudly, "although I was born in London. Mamma belonged to the Trenholme family, papa was a Virginian."

"But she was nine when she became Americanized," declared Mr. Osborne, with a teasing smile.

"Have you ever been back to your native land?"

"Oh, yes! I visited at Trenholme Court."

"Well, the whole thing is extremely odd. Why, I feel as if I had fallen among friends. One day that I was over Mrs. Osborne had gone out riding with her cousin. The second time I was so disgusted that I simply turned my horse's head, and resolved since I could not find the mountain,—or Mahomet, which?—I would remain here for a week and let it or him come to me."

Drayton had a smooth, rather indolent voice, that was quite fascinating. Dell decided at first that he was not at all handsome. The close-cropped beard had a warm tint, his complexion, save a strip of forehead, was dreadfully sunburned. Yet his eyes were large and clear, rather a steely blue, his nose straight, and his mouth piqued one's curiosity. It shut with a half smile that might be satiric or anything likely to lead conclusion astray. He was quite thirty, with a strong, lithe figure that had not begun to take on flesh. No, he could not compare with Mr. Osborne, Dell thought proudly.

They went on discussing the links of relationship in a rather amused manner.

"If we go back to the flood, we all started even as first cousins," declared Mr. Drayton. "There seems to be some doubt cast upon the Adamic relationship, for we are never quite sure where Cain found his wife. But this other is beyond dispute."

"Unless the flood wasn't universal."

"We find traces and legends of it everywhere. I have been roaming around the world considerably during the past five years. I should be glad to have a chat with you about India."

"Colonel Ashton will interest you there. You must

accept our hospitality for a few days, while we talk over your plans."

"Thank you. I shall use my eloquence in persuading you to go out to San Borendo with me. My patrimony lies there."

They rose from the table, and strolled up and down the long piazza, the two gentlemen together. An acquaintance claimed Mrs. Osborne, so Gifford had Dell to himself.

"I don't like that fellow," he said, in a tone of annoyance. "But Osborne asks everybody to the house. And he will be claiming a sort of right to you——"

"Oh, Gif, what an idea!" half provoked.

"You'll see. Something comes all the time to prevent my having any good talks with you," in a complaining tone. "When Osborne's away, I have to be on the go all the time, and Mr. Murray wanted you when he was in the house——"

"Oh, you foolish boy! There will be plenty of time. I am sure I have taken every opportunity to talk of all the 'sisters, and cousins, and aunts,'" and she gave a bright laugh.

"I want to talk about myself. Alice has her husband and her baby. When a girl is married, good-by to her. And next year, I suppose, it will be your turn."

"Nothing can impair my friendship for you," she made answer softly.

CHAPTER VI.

REESE DRAYTON.

MR. DRAYTON did not ride back with them, but was to come over the following morning. The night was magnificent, and the moon, rising slowly, flooded the world with a warm, golden haze, presently turning to silver. There were great, glowing stars about the edges of the horizon, as if the moon, in her shining, paled those nearer by. The solemn beauty of the night, with the serene hush that had fallen over everything, impressed Dell deeply. They took a different route, where by day the sun would blaze upon the weary traveler.

On their right, the gaunt and ugly rocks were softened, until to the imagination they seemed ruined and deserted castles, still majestic in their vast loneliness. Where the trees had gained a foothold, every branch and twig was tipped with silver. Masses of shadow were black and weird, save where they were differentiated by a gleam of light through an open space, and the vistas gave back answering shades to the mistress of the night. Now and then the cry of some bird broke the stillness, undisturbed by any passing wind. Dell thought of the solitude of the desert, to which was added the almost crushing silence of the mountains and hills, where not a breeze wandered. The tramp of the horses' feet scarcely sounded. The Osbornes, in the lead, looked elusive and shadowy.

Now that Gifford was sure of her for a while, he hardly knew how to begin. Her face looked so clearly cut in the moonlight, almost cold. She had changed during these years. She, too, had come to have the first and overwhelming interest in life.

She turned her head a little, and caught sight of the moody, dissatisfied countenance.

"Gifford," softly, sympathizingly.

Did she not have to listen to the joys and sorrows of all the cousins? Oh, no! Ethel did not demand anything. But neither did she give anything, beyond casual interest.

"Gifford, what was it you wanted to say? Are you not happy?" That sounded less decisive than unhappy. Was it morbid to be miserable here?

"Oh, Dell, there was so much! I've been counting on your coming out as the next best thing to going East myself."

"But I thought you were satisfied. All your early letters——" She paused, realizing that his later ones had not been so cheerful.

"Yes, I was glad to get away, to go anywhere and start afresh. It was the best thing then. But—maybe this will sound ungrateful to you—I want to go where I can better myself, where I can have something of my own. Didn't someone say long ago that it was a hard thing to look at happiness through other people's eyes."

Dell drew a long breath with an uneasy presentiment.

"After the baby came—well, Alice is wrapped up in it; you see when she does leave it Osborne fairly compels her. And she's still desperately in love with him. They're always going off alone, or sitting in the same hammock out of doors, or wandering through the fields,

or reading to each other. She looks up to catch his eye, he smiles over to her—it is each other, always."

Could anyone come between husband and wife? Hardly two and a half years married, how could they begin to tire of each other?

"But—Lady Ashton——"

"It is the same old story. Dell, I'm not complaining—I mean I am not finding individual fault. But I seem so on the outside of things, and I'm hungry for some life of my very own. Some aims and thoughts and plans, a calling that will advance me. I want a work *in* the great world."

"You have not lost your ambition, then!"

"I want to be a rich man. I want to make money now, and not go drifting along till middle life. I want to go back East and take my degree presently, and reinstate myself in everybody's estimation."

"That is all worth doing. But I thought there were opportunities here."

"Osborne has been very fair. As soon as I was strong enough to take a hand in things, he put me on a salary."

"That was fair, thoughtful."

"Of course it gives me a position, a certain independence. I've straightened up my one debt and am a free man. Until that was done I had no right to myself."

Lyndell's cheeks burned. When she had come into her inheritance she had made another appeal to Uncle Beaumanoir that she should be allowed to forgive the debt, but he had been inexorable. And later, when her engagement had been settled, and Sherburne House disposed of, Dr. Carew had insisted upon the rest being tied up to her own benefit, in the strictest manner. She

was to use no large sums, make no gifts or devises without her uncle's advice and consent.

"Carew is prouder than pride itself," her uncle said to Mr. Whittingham. "Yet I am very glad he proposes this course. While she shall have all she wants, it will do no harm if she does save up a little. And she has some quite imprudently generous traits, like her father. So it is well that two hard-headed, practical old fellows like ourselves have the power of restraining her occasionally."

"We all approve of the manliness. Uncle Beaumanoir was delighted," she made answer to Gifford in a tone she meant for comfort and approval.

"That's all finished and over with. I couldn't work for myself until that was done, and I had no right to throw up this until I had done it. But as I said, now I am a free man."

"But you do not mean to go away——"

"I want to do the best I can;" doggedly. "I'd like to make money as Osborne is doing, The ranch is fair, and the colonel is enchanted with the life, but Osborne's reaching out everywhere. He has a genius for engineering—both methods," with a short laugh. "He can see whether any scheme is likely to pay. He struck it in this irrigation business, and although he has been here only such a little while, he's authority with some of the big guns. You see, he belonged to an engineering corps in India, and has all the splendid training."

"Have you been studying anything?"

"Well—I've taken up Latin and Greek a little, and a few things. When I think of Len forging ahead and I might have been doing something—— Dell, you were awfully generous to him."

"It wasn't for him, altogether. It was for the Murrays' goodness and care of me. While no one would ever appreciate Sherburne House as he will, it is for Tessy and the children that may come to them."

"Well, it gives Len a big lift right in the beginning—the prestige of a grand old home. I couldn't have given it. I thought your father wanted you to keep it."

"He hoped mamma and I would come to it some time. But you know he had no thought of dying. The Sherburnes have had a pretty good hold on life."

"I wonder Bertram Carew consented."

"He really proposed it," Dell returned proudly.

"I don't believe I should have been so generous. And do you know I fancied he would marry Millicent some time."

Dell's cheeks were in a scarlet flame for a moment.

"And she is getting to be famous. Amory had a picture in the Paris Salon and a Russian duke paid a big price for it. Harry's having no end of a good time, and will be home presently crowned with honors."

"They are all older than you," said Dell consolingly.

"And some day Alice may be the wife of a millionaire. You know how they felt about her marriage—poor mother especially. Take a glowing account back with you. The ranch may not be so stylish, but Alice has journeys that even Ethel couldn't disdain. And Osborne's making a superb collection of diamonds for her."

Dell had seen several of them, as fine as anything Ethel possessed.

"Yes, they are all on the ascending scale."

"Oh, Gif! don't envy anyone," she besought, for his tone conveyed it in the dissatisfaction.

"Well—I do; I can't help it, here alone. For I might

almost as well be alone. I do spend days of the utmost solitude around with the workmen. I'm tired of it! I want to get back to the world, back to you all. Haven't I done penance enough?"

"Don't put it that way," implored Dell.

"Well—that is it, and the truth. I was a fool, a shallow, fatuous, easily tempted young fellow, perhaps not worse than dozens of others, but bad enough. I promised you to redeem it all, and I have. And now I want to take my place in the world, and make some kind of a mark, make some money."

"Oh, Gifford, a true life has better aims than that. Do you remember, before you went away,"—she was somehow feeling disappointed in the lower tone of his mind,—"all the talks we had about the future—and your hopes and resolves through your father's illness? Oh, you were so much to him."

"I am glad I could do it in that dreary time. But one outgrows boyish fancies—sees more clearly."

"Loiterers!" said a rich cheerful voice, "are you star gazing, or what? Dell, did you ever know a more magnificent night unless it was the one Lorenzo and Jessica tossed about in lover-like fashion? Are you tired with your rather long ride?"

"Oh, no!" But her voice sounded a little strange to herself. She was troubled by her cousin's mood.

"We are almost home. I don't think there will be any smoke from our beloved chimney to welcome the travelers, but the aspect begins to grow familiar."

"You are tired," said Alice, with tender solicitude, noting the strain in her voice. "Suppose we have a little gallop. It will stir your blood. One gets rather chilly riding so slowly."

They started up at a brisker pace and soon reached home. The exercise had brought the color back to Dell's cheeks. There was a tempting little supper spread for them. Lady Ashton in a white flannel gown had been napping on the sofa, while the baby slept soundly in his crib and only gave a little sigh at his mother's rapturous kisses. She looked so lovely, wifehood and motherhood written all over her face. Was she simply Bevis Osborne's wife and baby's mother? No, she was Lady Ashton's daughter. Her own mother had never loved her half as well, or cared as much for her love.

She put her arms around the elder lady's neck.

"I felt so comfortable all the time about baby," she said, with a soft, bright laugh. "Whatever *should* I do without you."

"You look tired out, Gif," exclaimed his brother-in-law. "Come and have a cup of hot coffee. I feel as if I hadn't eaten anything for a month."

There was a rather moody light in his eyes. No, he was not happy. What could she, Dell, do for him? Would it be better for him to try the East again? Had he not been losing the spiritual poise that he had taken up tremblingly, but she had hoped in real earnest, through those last months he had spent at Sherburne House.

She did not see him the next morning. He had gone off on some pressing business after taking an early breakfast alone.

"I am enjoying a calm before the storm begins," laughed Osborne, as the others came to a rather late meal. "I shall soon be torn from the bosom of my family and plunged into arid wilds again. Oh, have you told Lady Ashton whom we unearthed last night? Let me see—his friend is to marry one of the Trenholme girls.

Am I right?"—glancing at the two ladies. "Seems to me Lady Trenholme's family is being depleted rapidly. There will be none left to come out here and cheer our old age;" with humorous regret in his voice.

"Another one! Why, that must be Edith. The second wedding is to be in Easter week. What about the young man?"

"An adopted American, it seems, by name Kingsley. Mr. Drayton is coming over this morning, and he will give you all the particulars—they are some connection. And this Mr. Drayton has been left a large estate by a queer old hermit uncle who has been living here forty years or so, and done nothing with it. Someone sent him to me,—oh, it was this Mr. Kingsley. You see, my dear Lady Ashton, a prophet does sometimes have honor in his own country," rather triumphantly.

"Does he want you to buy the estate?" inquired the colonel.

"Oh, I think there are vague ideas of founding a city. There had once been an old Mexican mission at San Borendo, but it is mostly ruins, and is the rendezvous of a few half breeds and Indians. It seems that the old man had deeded some land to a railroad company with the right of a station at this place. A syndicate has made Drayton a proposition for the land, but he wants a disinterested opinion on it before he takes a step either way."

"Then are you to go with him?"

"I have the invitation. Expenses paid and luncheons provided;" laughingly. "He is to bring maps and surveys, and we are to take a day to consider. He will remain all night, and we are to start in the morning. There you have all this strange moving history."

"Your histories are generally moving," returned Alice, with a half saucy grace. "Not quite as bad as a local preacher, however."

"You do not have to go along to listen to the arguments, or the efforts to turn over-wise people from the error of their ways. I invite you mostly to the junketings;" and he gave a slight jaunty turn to his shoulder.

"Then the junketing gets invited hitherward," said Dell. "Is it the fashion out here?"

"How did you girls like this Mr.——"

"This one's name is Drayton. Don't get him confused with your niece's lover. I thought he was rather taken aback with the family titles and everything. Put on your most imposing attire, court train and all. Dell, there will be no excuse for big eyes—he is not fond of lovers."

Dell blushed vividly.

"How old is he?" inquired Lady Ashton.

"Beyond thirty perhaps. Not especially handsome."

"There's something curious in his voice. Fascinating is rather too strong, but it is pleasant to listen to," said Alice.

They lingered a long while over the table; it was one of their delights when there was no cause for haste. Dell was wondering about Gifford, and her heart went out to him. Couldn't Alice see he was quite outside, and growing morbid?

It was nearly noon when Mr. Drayton reached them. He had come through the ravine, and was enthusiastic about it.

"But it felt like an oven when I struck the sunshine. How have you managed to make such an Eden of loveliness hereabout?"

"It was begun before we came. I have only added to it and gone on improving. Will you go to your room and see the ladies afterward? Luncheon will soon be in order."

The Chinese servant took his small parcel of luggage, and ushered him up the broad staircase. The room in its cool simplicity pleased him. No useless attempt at ornament or art hanging from everywhere; no foolish little rugs to trip over.

"At least they know how to be comfortable," he said to himself.

But he really felt out of humor that he had not taken the trouble to go to Trenholme Court. Of course he had heard about the coming marriage of his friend's sister-in-law elect, he had even seen the pretty suburban house in which they were to begin their housekeeping. Young Kingsley did not expect to be married under a year or so.

The luncheon was interspersed with family gossip. Drayton was afraid he should never get the relationship straight, but he managed to impress upon his memory that this pretty, tall girl, with the fine eyes so full of expression, lived in Virginia when she was at home, and that she was to make a visit of some length, with her cousin, and inspect the wonders of the Western Coast. He had been over the Canadian route to Alaska, and thence down to San Francisco, but never explored the southern country; little imagining he would ever have an interest in it.

For two hours afterward the three men studied the maps and diagrams. The spur of railroad to be built would connect with the Southern Pacific. It would cut the Drayton estate in two. The offer had been made for

all the land lying northward, wooded on the farthest boundary and nourished by several small streams that generally overflowed in the rainy season.

"We have been a long time applying the knowledge of the old Egyptians," remarked Drayton, with a half satirical smile; "and haven't believed Solomon when he said there was nothing new under the sun. I'm not sure but Job had more wisdom than the Jewish king. Wonderful book, that of Job. All the old philosophies are there in a nut-shell—all the so-called new beliefs."

"Yes," returned the colonel. "Either the world was far advanced in those days and has degenerated, or there was a sort of prophetic insight in the time to come."

"When you go over the ground it makes things wonderfully real. And yet 'They had their day and ceased to be.'"

"Until we rediscover them," said Osborne, "it gives us something to do. In India people came to the end of their knowledge and stopped, believing they were part of the gods."

"I should like to take a journey there with you, Osborne. But when a man has given hostages to fortune——" and his eyes wandered over to the fair wife.

"I think I had an Englishman's longing for a home of his own. And to tell the truth, I came here and was enchanted. Then I was fortunate enough to get the woman I wanted. I am satisfied."

"Very few people say that, or can say it. They like to flatter themselves their aims are too high. I have a vague misgiving there are no real aims to my life. I don't know as I should have bothered about this land but from the urgent letters from the syndicate. Still I am not so improvident that I despise a good bargain."

The voice and general manner were quite at variance with the eyes and certain lines about the mouth. "Prosperity in his youth has spoiled a fine fellow," thought Osborne, "and left an ease-loving self."

"Not having much experience in these matters, I hardly knew whom to trust. My lawyer in New York advised me to close at once, with a haste that seemed suspicious. I thought if my half should prove worthless, it might not be such a fine bargain. Odd that I should have spoken to Kingsley, though this was the cause of my sudden return. I wasn't half through my wanderings."

Dell caught the complaining and but half sincere tone, and was amused by it. She was sitting at the window in a willow rocker reading snatches from the "Idylls of the King."

"I have had some experience in values. Given a railroad and a method of irrigation, you can make the wilderness bloom and find a market for your blossoms. Every year immigration increases, self-respecting, industrial immigration from the East, the Northwest, from overcrowded cities. By the time it reaches us it is sifted and winnowed from the chaff."

"You are more fortunate than the East. Yet I should call this the true lotus land, where it is always afternoon."

Dell glanced up and smiled. Drayton did not seem to move, yet he caught the pleasure and appreciation reflected in her face.

"I must know more of this girl," he said to himself, but he went on discussing the wonders and advantages of this marvelous section. It was a reticent face in its moments of gravity; he could imagine all its avenues of

confession closing at once and leaving you quite in the dark, in spite of its frankness and susceptibility to every emotion.

They folded their maps presently and went out on the wide sheltered porch for a smoke and a comparison of experiences, settling upon an early start the next morning. Part of the journey would be by rail, but they would need their horses.

"Which of you ladies is musical?" Drayton asked, with cordial interest, sauntering down to the window when Osborne had excused himself to attend to some matters of importance.

"All of us," returned Mrs. Osborne.

"Music is one of my passions. I have only a few left, and they are mere shadows of their former selves."

"We have to make our own amusements largely. Now and then something comes to us, or we go to it."

"It is not a bad plan. You are kept in practice. Virtues and accomplishments often die of inanition."

Dell smiled at the tone, and decided that she liked to hear him talk, though she should never believe very thoroughly in him. Why? she wondered, and flushed softly. She was so much in love that she wanted to compare every new experience with Bertram. Would he understand this Mr. Drayton? Of course; he met so many men.

Drayton had a fancy he would like to read her thoughts.

"It is the hour for music—this and evening. Did you ever go to a morning musicale or recital?"

"Yes," both answered in a breath.

"Didn't it seem incongruous—rather labored? You go out in the woods to hear the birds when the air is

sweet with dew and a thousand perfumes; but they have a fine sense of harmonious fitness, and stop through the middle of the day."

"I had not given them credit for that. I know they do. We have so many at home. And such beautiful woods;" with a lingering sweetness in her tone as she raised her eyes and let them fall again. His look rather disconcerted her.

"Virginia! I know about Old Point Comfort and Fortress Monroe. I must pay my respects to the whole State sometime, if life should be long enough. Won't one of you play—the best player?" laughingly.

"Then it must be Mrs. Osborne. She is a pianist by nature—my playing is a matter of grace and infinite labor."

He stepped softly within and began to look over the music. There were some exquisite Spanish songs.

"And the violin?"

"That is Mr. Osborne's. We read 'Robert Elsmere,' and were so interested in Rose, or her music, or her lover, that I began to play."

"Her lover! I wanted to kick him out in the Channel! I've forgotten whether he could swim."

Drayton took up the violin.

"Oh, you play! I see it in your looks. A player always handles a violin as if it was human. Let us find a duet. Here is a lovely Spanish song with the two parts."

"Yes, I know it. Can you sing and play the accompaniment?"

Alice inclined her head and took her seat. Dell stood by the corner of the piano.

It was a moving, fascinating melody, a parting between

two lovers, inevitable, for fate had been cruel, but accepted with a certain bravery that moved one. The soft pauses in the voice when the violin notes wandered along like an evening breeze, almost indistinct, then returning, as if to taste the sweet sorrow.

"I never heard anything more beautiful in my life!" said Dell, deeply moved. "How you have improved."

"I ought to. I have played and sung so much since I have been out here. Mr. Drayton, you are no novice;" looking up with delighted approval.

"No," he made answer. "It was my boyish love, my first love, and it has been my manhood's solace. And I haven't seen that song since I sang it at Seville with a dark-eyed señorita, but the refrain lingered in my mind. She was a pretty young widow, so I ran no risk among the suspicious hot heads," laughingly. "Let us see what else there is."

They found a nocturne arranged for both instruments, a great favorite of Lyndell's. They played on until Osborne returned, having met Gifford, who glanced into the sitting room with a sort of indignant amaze.

They were very gay at dinner, except the young man, who made his headache an excuse for taking no part in the bright talk. He felt he was beginning to hate this Mr. Drayton, and was glad he was to go to-morrow.

After dinner the colonel and Mr. Drayton had several games of chess, both being excellent players. Dell came around to her cousin.

"I'm dead tired," he said fretfully. "Do you mind if I lounge a little here? Oh, Dell, I wish you could read to me. It would be like old times."

She toyed with his soft hair and made passes over his forehead, but presently the colonel exclaimed:

"Let us have a concert. We have had an addition to our talent, and music is such a pleasure to me. Then you are to be away——"

"We can have the flute and the violin, if not the bassoon," exclaimed Dell eagerly, as she half rose and then was restrained by Gifford's outstretched hand.

"But you play the flute! Isn't your headache better after this long rest?" in a tone of solicitude that was still persuasive.

"Not equal to that. Besides, Bevis does better than I any day; and that fellow will want to distinguish himself on the violin. Stay here with me. You can hear as well. I've not seen you all day."

Lyndell settled herself again. It really did not matter.

"Will you come, Gifford?" inquired his brother-in-law.

"Excuse me, please. Being out in the hot sun has knocked me up. Besides, you must have an appreciative audience," rather sharply.

Osborne took up the flute, and presently they were under way with some delightful trios. Dell wanted to listen and not talk. What possessed Gifford? His comments were not sympathetic, and she was so stirred, so exalted by several passages.

Then Mrs. Osborne and Drayton played together again. The man had a sort of wizard touch and could move one in any direction.

"Your playing is a great pleasure to me," Osborne exclaimed, with something beyond mere compliment. His eyes were kindled and his very soul shone in them.

"Thank you! But I shall always remain greatly your debtor for this delightful hospitality."

The colonel started up to add his meed of praise.

"They were singing something this afternoon, my dear Alice. Has Bevis heard that?" Lady Ashton inquired.

"Oh, the little Spanish farewell that we try at occasionally. It is just exquisite. Bevis, you must get the other part perfect," smiling eagerly at her husband.

"Then let me hear it, please. Mrs. Osborne didn't know a word of Spanish when she came here, and now she can talk like a native."

"Oh, you forget two little guitar songs that I didn't understand. I acquired that much Spanish at school."

They found the music and moved their hearers immeasurably. Even Gifford was silent from an enforced sense of enjoyment; Mr. Osborne was enraptured.

"But I'm afraid I never shall have the courage to try it after that," he said, with a smile of doubt.

"Doesn't your cousin sing? Can't we have all the parts in something?" Drayton asked.

"Oh, yes! Lyndell and I used to sing so much at Sherburne House. She has a really good contralto voice, and does very well in alto. Dell!"

Gifford's clasp tightened. "They might leave you to a poor fellow," in a grumbling whisper.

"We want you to complete the quartet. Gifford, I am sorry you have such a wretched headache. Does the sound make it any worse?"

"It can't well be made worse," rather ungraciously.

Alice had crossed the room and put her cool hand on his forehead with gentle tranquillity. "I am so sorry, dear," she said again. "Come, Dell!"

Drayton had been watching the by-play.

"The young cub is in love with his cousin, and she is very sympathetic. But she doesn't know anything about

love. There is a strong individuality,—she's wonderfully attractive,—but if someone doesn't look out for her she'll go drifting on quicksands. What is her voice like, I wonder?"

He gave a brief, indrawn smile when she came. Her cheeks were a little flushed, her mouth had a dewy sweetness, and youth seemed written all over her, youth and inexperience. Even her voice had the sound of youth in it, and it also had a restful sound to the worldly man who had listened to many a voice.

CHAPTER VII.

SEEN THROUGH THE EYES OF YOUTH.

COLONEL ASHTON was bodyguard by day, for Gifford had many things to look after when Osborne went away. But the young man tried to get home to luncheon, and there were the long, delicious evenings. He seemed really to take possession of Dell.

"You are too devoted," remarked Alice to her.

"I think Gifford isn't quite happy——" Lyndell began, in a deprecating manner, looking past rather than at her cousin.

"I am sure he isn't."

"But—Alice——" in tender perplexity.

"I hoped your coming would settle him to a resolution of some kind. He has not been confidential with me. I thought he might confide his plans and desires to you, if they were not too unreasonable."

"He has—a little," flushing with embarrassment.

"Does he want to go away?"

"Alice, what shall I say?" Dell's face was scarlet. Was not a sister nearer than a cousin. How could she come between?

"I think he does. I suppose most young men like to strike out for themselves; perhaps it is best. He longs for the stir and crowds of cities; he is tired of our solitudes," was the rejoinder.

"But don't you see, Alice, you have your husband and baby. You couldn't give Gifford such an entire affection."

"If I could it might not be the best thing. Some day another woman would come into his life and I should be pushed aside. He would feel that he never had any aims or thoughts or lofty impulses, until she inspired them. I should sacrifice my husband and children in vain," Alice said decisively.

"But are there not some ways——" Dell paused and glanced up with troubled eyes.

"All the first year we took him in everything. There were times when I made Bevis give up his wishes in unimportant matters. But after the baby came, Dell, it drew us together with a strange, mysterious oneness. We were so happy. You may understand all the blessedness yourself in the future, and I felt then no one ever could come between us again, that there was no one whose interests I must make first. A few weeks after we were settled here, Bevis thought it best to give Gifford something special to do, and put him on a salary. He was very ambitious and energetic—a real help; he is still. Last year his salary was increased. Bevis wanted him to study engineering."

"Oh, why doesn't he?"

"He is not fond of study. I think that was against him in college; he loves to dream and idle his time, and yet Bevis thinks he might be roused to undertake something more ambitious. But he won't do it as a ranchman. You see, Bevis is settled here for years to come. There are many delights in our lives. I can't begin to tell you how we enjoy the journeys about, and the home-life after we have been away, the friends we entertain, who bring

such a whiff of freshness. But how could Ethel endure it?" glancing up questioningly.

Both girls laughed. The idea was absurd.

"And if Gifford went East again? He is desirous of finishing his interrupted college course."

"What then, I wonder?" Alice's eyes were full of troubled inquiry. She had evidently studied the subject.

"But uncle thought——"

"Yes, papa wanted him to study law. And if *he* were alive making money it would be different. It is slow work unless one has a good deal of push, or good fortune comes to one, as it did to Leonard. Of course,"—smiling rather sadly,—"there are young men who would triumph over every obstacle, who would work day and night; there are men without friends or means who have gone to work and acquired both. Even Bevis took many hardships in early life, and he had money. But I am afraid Gifford wants things to come to him. And they have an obstinate way of not coming in many cases."

"Then you believe it would not be best for him to go East?"

"Dell, dear, don't hold out hopes to him. You have made one secure bridge for him to pass over out of that horrible slough. You and Uncle Beaumanoir were his guardian angels. But I have a queer feeling that I don't want him to go back and face old friends and old companions just yet. You *could* make it possible for him. You are generous——"

Dell flushed painfully. "I don't know"—attempting to laugh it off—"that I have so much power. When everything was settled—Bertram did it," and there was a delicious half shamefaced tenderness in her eyes. "He wouldn't have any money but where it would seem

to belong to him. And I can't undertake anything without consulting Uncle Beaumanoir. I have some spending money regularly, and the rest I must ask for, give an account of."

Alice drew a long breath of relief.

"I am very glad Uncle Beaumanoir thinks Gifford is better off out here a while longer. Really, I want him to accomplish something and acquire a standing of his own before he goes back. I did not suppose he would ask you for any help—I was afraid you might offer. If Bevis believed it best, he would send him at once; we have talked it over. It is hard to know just what to do with another life. It is so easy to set it wrong with the best intentions. We hardly know what to do with our own. But Bevis is so strong and self-reliant."

Dell was amazed. Had she looked so wrongly at this one? She had considered him crowded out of the best of life, or rather set aside with indifference.

"I'm so sorry. I wish he took a vital interest in everything, as he did at first. He is listless a good deal of the time; not neglectful, but personally indifferent. He wants a strong motive. I am telling you this, Dell, so that if you hear of a change, if there is an opening at a distance, you will know why he went. He has come to manhood, and ought to be able to make his own choice."

"No one would blame you," answered Dell quickly. Yet she was a little confused. And the old question came back. Could one trust him anywhere? Would the past weakness ever crop out?

She did not dare suggest this to Alice.

"Don't think me hard or unsisterly," the sweet voice pleaded; "or even selfish in my own happiness."

Dell sprang to her side, and kissed her fondly.

"I can never think that of you. And, Alice, you have developed into a stronger and more reliant woman than I ever thought possible. You have so many ideas of your own ; you are so firm and wise with baby."

"Bevis has made me so. At first I was for deferriny to him in everything, and giving up to Gifford. And you know, they used to say Leonard was spoiled by everybody yielding to him ! But I have learned you can give in to people's weaknesses as well as their strength. And each person is entitled to some part of his own life."

Gifford was very manly and attentive while Mr. Osborne was away. But Dell, with her quickened insight, found that he had some of Ethel's least admirable characteristics. She always took the first place, the best attentions, and made herself the central figure. Gifford had a vein of jealousy with the trait that looked like humility. He did not like to share what he loved with another.

She found this out, and it amused her when the travelers returned. They had thought four or five days would suffice ; instead, they remained away nearly a fortnight, and on their return, were fast friends, with no little respect and admiration for one another. They had gone carefully over the ground, and the estate seemed immense to Drayton. Another offer had been made by a contending party, who were anxious to change the line of the road. For several days, the feeling had run very high.

"I should simply offer the ground for the road," said Bevis, when he had considered it from all sides. "That settles the road. The one system of water-works will

be advantageous to both tracts, so I should not yield that point. With the exception of the water right, the west side is really more picturesque and attractive, and in time, you may unearth some hidden springs. Anyhow, there remain artesian wells. The half would be worth more to you than the whole tract unimproved. These people seem to see their way clear to settle the place speedily. Towns in this wonderful country take shape in a year or two."

"I should still have the old ruin if I want to turn hermit myself. But how any man could spend thirty or forty years in this solitude, with no companionship but Indians and these roving Mexicans, passes my comprehension."

"I shouldn't like it myself," said Osborne. "Yet, cleared up and brought under industrial influences, this will be magnificent farming land. I'm not sure but man deserves a good deal of credit for subduing the wildness of nature and building towns, Ruskin to the contrary."

"I confess to a fondness for something more than towns—cities. I have a hankering for that despised thing, effete civilization," and Drayton gave his pleasant laugh.

They had lingered for surveys, and discussed terms, coming nearer and then flying off, watching each other with wary eyes and vague suspicions of being over-reached. Finally, they touched that point where further consideration would do no harm. The syndicate found they were not dealing with someone at a distance who was ignorant of values.

Among the directors of the new road Osborne found two acquaintances, whom he interested in his companion. He took such a vital interest in improvements of this

kind, for already his heart was in his adopted country. And both men had been so used to roughing it in emergencies, that they had not really minded the inconveniences.

Still, it was refreshing to get back to household life and the soft sweet graces of womenkind—though the first evening they neither played chess nor evoked the delightfulness of music. Colonel Ashton was all interest in even the partial result achieved.

"I shall have to send my friend Kingsley a munificent wedding gift," Drayton said laughingly. "I simply couldn't have done anything alone. And I realize now that the New York lawyer was something of a sharper; but if no one had advised me I dare say I should have been fleeced well with the agents on both sides. But then I never expected any such inheritance."

Colonel Ashton studied the map. "You have the mountains," he said. "And one never knows what mountains in California may bring forth."

"I have the picturesque aspects certainly, and the ruined old mission that has been a lurking place for what civilization calls tramps. And such a wealth of wild flowers! I never saw anything so gorgeous. I doubt if Eden had a fairer show."

"They talk about their thousands as if they were mere bagatelle," Gifford said to Dell half jealously. "Why do you suppose this came to a man rich already, as this Mr. Drayton must be? He seems to have gone everywhere and seen everything."

"And enjoyed it to the full. He is not a bit *blasé*. I like to hear him and Cousin Bevis compare notes. They have gone over a good deal of the same ground, and both views are entertaining."

And *he* had nothing. An angry protest rose in the soul of Gifford Lepage. How did a man start to make money out of nothing?

All the next day they talked and planned. It was the most enchanting season of the year. Was there not some beautiful place where they could all go? There was Tulare Lake, a sort of inland sea; there was the Pacific coast; the beautiful beaches and islands and ranges of mountains. Oh, yes! there was enough to entertain one for a year.

"But I cannot stay a year," said Lyndell regretfully. "And I do not want to take in all. I want something left."

Something for the two to enjoy together when they set out on their pilgrimage. "See all you can for me, and write me everything," Bertram had said. "Your letters have such a charm. Think how they will drop like sunshine and a whiff of fresh air into my busy life." She was seeing for him, gathering up richness for him. She paused with a dainty, illusive flush; half forgetting Mr. Drayton was not of the household. Yet how wonderfully at home they all felt with him, save Gifford. That amused her.

"There is a great deal of nonsense talked about the first sight of things in general," began Mr. Drayton, with a half satirical smile. "I do not think the man or woman has yet been born with eyes and soul large enough to take in all the fine points of nature at a glance. There are places in which I should always find something new and charming. I like to go over old roads and recall the tree that was here and is missing, the shrub that has grown up in the waste place, the flowers later or earlier according to their season. Miss Sherburne, you must not begin life by tiring so easily."

"Oh, I do not tire, neither do I lose interest; I can even read some books over a second time with the same youthful fervor. Only I seem to want surprises stretched along my life, for I have a presentiment that I shall live to a ripe old age," she confessed, with a winsome smile.

"I am glad you can read books over; I shall begin to envy your imaginary friends. I have some of those preserved in the amber of magic pens long since laid by, that I not infrequently use for traveling companions, and their experiences appeal to me in a hundred different fashions. Will it be heterodox to say they sometimes come nearer than living ones? But I must not destroy your happy illusions of youth."

"I don't want them to be illusions. If a man, or a genius, put a true man or a woman in any book, was not it because there are true men and women in the world?"

"I suppose he must have seen a certain kinship or dreamed it. I *hope* he saw it."

There was an indescribable sweetness of perfect belief in Lyndell's frank, attractive face; yet it was so devoid of self-consciousness. What was the inward satisfying light?

"We have been straying from our text. I ramble that way through a wood, striking off in by-paths. And sometimes I get lost," laughingly. "You see it spoils one to have nothing to consult but his own whims. Well, there is a fortnight to put in somewhere, while those people at San Borendo decide. I know they have made their decision. It is only a question of screwing me down a few thousands. Mr. Osborne has put so much backbone into me that I am amazed. They never imagined a few

months ago they would have such a stiff old fellow to deal with. Can't we make a grand picnic and go off somewhere, lest a temptation of weakness assails me?"

He glanced up at the two men. Osborne looked over at Alice for consent or suggestion.

"It would be delightful!" exclaimed Lady Ashton. "I have some Oriental tastes. I like traveling with a retinue. There were some coast places we were going to take in last year——"

The baby had come to interrupt that. And now Alice said: "A baby and nurse to bring up the rear. How will you enjoy that?"

"Indeed, we shall put him in the fore-front. Now is the most delightful time for journeys. We shall escape the summer heats and the intolerable dryness. And I think Dell will not see quite all of the world in our little corner."

"Let us get out the maps and study them up. They are like your first experience of Badeker. They deceive you, but there is nothing else in which to put your faith —not even princes, here."

"Well, I'm not so sure. We *do* stumble over them occasionally, ruins of more prosperous times."

"Or imitation of a master left behind, whose manners are copied with an astonishing fidelity that at times deceives the very elect where loans are concerned."

"I have felt surprised at that," said Lady Ashton. "Why are people so ready to trust when so many frauds are unearthed?"

She glanced around her small audience as if the question were quite a new and perplexing one.

"America dearly loves a lord, is the answer to that conundrum, I think," gravely returned Drayton.

"Come, Dell, choose. Perhaps down the coast might do for another journey. We could strike across here. There are some tolerable passes in the Santa Lucia range, and some magnificent peaks. Then taking the road up here we shall have them to the west of us, until we are clear up to the Bay of Monterey, which is worth seeing, I assure you," and Mr. Osborne raised his eyes to his other guest. "Perhaps we should take it in midwinter to appreciate all its enchanting beauty. But even May will do;" smilingly.

"Why, it seems like fairyland," began Dell, turning the pages of a guide book. "Alice, would you like it?"

"Except for the mountains. The baby——"

"He can be slung to Ah Lung's back. If not, we can pick up some Mexican woman for a trifle. As for the grown people who can't be carried—but there are sure-footed mules——"

"It will be a good practice for donkey-riding in Egypt, when Miss Sherburne gets that far."

"I have had my practice in Egypt," confessed Lady Ashton, with a rather triumphant smile.

"And I in England," appended Dell archly.

"I had a glimpse of the place coming down. May I add a casting vote? And then if one could return partly by water. Yes, let us decide. Or didn't anyone vote? Is it silence that consents?"

Mr. Drayton glanced around with an assumption of surprise.

They all laughed.

"There really is no time to lose. We must vote at once, and then pack our gripsacks. And will we all go?"

Osborne asked the question rather tentatively.

"I think I ought to stay at home," said the colonel "and give Gifford the chance. The lad doesn't seem real well and bright."

"There is no need of anyone's staying. All the work can be mapped out and nothing will suffer. There is plenty of help."

Gifford was not home to luncheon. By night every objection of Mrs. Osborne's had been overruled, and plans laid to start the second day hence. The young fellow listened without any special comment. They had a bright evening together, but he watched the newer guest with jealous eyes. Of course Drayton was half in love with Dell already. Couldn't anyone see? He had a way of appealing to her, of appropriating her. To be sure he carried it off with an assumption of age and a half disbelief in any sort of sentiment, but he was not old enough to be fatherly.

True, cordial as they were, they did not drop into any little liberties such as youth in its innocent carelessness is apt to take. Dell was in a secret world of her own. Even he, Gifford, had come to feel that every other interest was secondary to her one great love. Of course he was willing to have her marry Bertram Carew, but why should it crowd him out of the old cousinly place?

And for the last few days she had been unsympathetic. She did not give of her abundant pity and interest. It was because she found Mr. Drayton so much more entertaining.

If he went with them he would be the fifth wheel. To be sure Lady Ashton was always sweet and kindly solicitous. This very evening he had seen her effort to keep him in the circle of enjoyment. Would Dell care, really?

Colonel Ashton rather precipitated his decision by thinking it best someone should remain, and proposing it should be himself. Then Gifford insisted that he did not care to go just now. He had taken one delightful trip with Con Murray over nearly the same ground.

"But you don't need to stay," declared his brother-in-law. "For that brief time nothing can go quite to destruction. And, Gif, a shaking up will do you good. You've grown moping and out of spirits."

"I'm tired, that's all. I'd rather be quiet than to go hustling round. There's some reading I want to do." Gifford's tone was unnecessarily sharp.

"You may reconsider between this and morning."

Could he let Dell go without a word? Was it anything Dell was doing? She did enjoy the music, but she was never alone with Mr. Drayton an instant. No, it was because the man thought any woman free to be fallen in love with. That he might indulge in the pleasure—as if Gifford really knew about love-making! That he could look at her with lights in his eyes that would be forbidden if he only knew! That he could sing songs to her alone, even if she did not understand. It was his gratification that so angered the young man.

Gifford did not reconsider.

"He has grown reserved and touchy," said Alice. "Perhaps I did wrong. I did not want Dell to imagine that he was neglected in any way, and I made a suggestion." Alice looked up at her husband with large troubled eyes. "Bevis, you have been like an own brother to him."

"Never mind, dear, I think he likes to be first; perhaps we have all spoiled him a little. And he is reach-

ing out for something different. I am rather pleased with his discontent. I have a project in my mind if I can bring it about that may be to his advantage. And to tell the truth I am better satisfied with his staying. I wanted the colonel to go with a contented mind."

Alice gave an acquiescent nod. Gifford in his present captious mood would not have been an inspiriting companion.

The ladies were putting the last touches to themselves and the small amount of luggage allowed. Gifford sat in the shade perusing the paper when Mr. Drayton sauntered down the long porch, blowing wreaths of smoke through the clear air, and smiled with a friendliness that irritated Gifford as he glanced up.

There was such an immeasurable distance between the experienced man and the crude boy, yet each had a longing to have it out with the other. "The lad is a fool to sulk over the enjoyments that befit his years," Drayton mused. "He ought to have the nonsense knocked out of him. He is hankering after his cousin, and she has a curious, tender pity for him. I suppose everyone has to take his own hard-won knowledge, and that is what we call experience. The weak do sometimes prevail over the strong."

"If I could tell him before they start," Gifford was thinking. He had a jealous desire to take some zest out of the excursion.

So they fenced in a manner amusing to the elder man, neither aware of the truth on the other side. Gifford's opportunity came first, and he took it exultantly. Dell's name had been mentioned casually in connection with the length of her stay.

"I wish my sister *could* keep her for a long while. But she is to be married next autumn,—perhaps sooner, —so we must make the most of her."

Drayton stopped short. Yes, he was surprised. "Married!" he cried. "That child engaged!"

"She isn't so much of a child as you seem to think. A year ago she was of age," Gifford returned, with rising temper. He had not spoken too soon.

"She is a sincere, clear-minded, inexperienced child for all that. Does she marry this cousin you talk about? Were the family bound to appropriate her?"

"He was married six months and more ago."

"Well, I hope no one will hurry her, and that she will know what she wants."

"She has the one she wanted, and the one who desired her above all others. They have been friends almost ever since she came to Sherburne. There is no danger of her making a mistake," Gifford said, in a tone of triumph, angered at the eyes bent so curiously upon him.

What was the matter with the young fellow, if he was not a little touched with jealousy, unknowingly perhaps?

Drayton smiled, and yet he was puzzled over the simple announcement that did not explain. Perhaps the young fellow thought *he* needed the warning.

He turned abruptly and walked away with a sudden rising color; but he had a great longing to shake the breath half out of him. Warn *him* indeed! Then he laughed softly to himself.

Why wasn't Miss Sherburne wearing the sign and seal, an engagement ring?

Gifford had asked her the same question.

"I don't know why I should go about with an announcement written on my very brow! I hate to have strangers look at my ring, and then inspect me from head to foot," Dell had answered. "It is never separated from me a moment, and since Bertram consented, I feel quite right about it. I have seen so much silliness over an engagement ring."

CHAPTER VIII.

A VISION OF DELIGHT.

THE weather was simply superb. The clear delightful air tempered by the nearness to the ocean and the mountain heights was exhilarating. After they had passed these a world beautiful dawned upon them. Lyndell thought there could be only a repetition of what had gone before, but she had no words to express her delight. She could only look and look.

They had gone up to the terminus through hills and valleys and glimpses of the river, dropping at last down a weird gorge. Great grain fields, plantations of beets for sugar-making, pretty towns with industries one almost wondered at, residences that were palatial, with grounds that were parks in themselves, and at last the quaint old town of Monterey, and the placid wide-mouthed bay that had never been really divorced from the broad ocean.

They were tired enough to rest in the quiet hotel that seemed to have come into existence centuries agone, and had a curiously foreign aspect. The lovely old groves and woodlands gnarled and twisted by the storms of ages ; the immense oaks, that had listened perhaps to the first mass that celebrated the Spanish discovery and possession of the country. Rich in tragic memories of the struggles between the followers of the Cross and barbaric savages, it had become the cradle of far Western civilization long

before the East planted her pilgrim host in a cold and unfriendly wilderness.

"It has age everywhere stamped upon it," said Drayton. "One can hardly imagine one's self in America. These crooked streets and narrow lanes, these disorderly ways losing themselves among the rolling hills and wandering down gentle slopes to the sea, with their impress of bygone and forgotten generations, is worth as much as a journey to Europe. When did it all come about? I feel lost and benighted. Miss Sherburne, I beseech you to hasten to my assistance—your school days cannot be so far back; mine seem buried in obscurity."

Dell flushed, and confessed her ignorance in a charming manner.

"The Spanish came here early in 1600. Philip III. was on the throne. The projector of the expedition was the Count of Monte Rey. But the real mission was not founded until nearly one hundred and seventy years later, to mark the point of discovery, and some time afterward it was removed to Carmelo valley."

"Colonel Ashton, you shame us all!" cried Dell.

"I had no fol-de-rols to pack," returned the colonel laughingly,—"an old stager like myself can travel with a shawl strap,—so I fortified my mind with a few historical facts. And you all know that here was fought one of the great battles for Texan independence—or rather we might say for Californian independence, wresting this section from the control of Mexico."

"And Miss Carrick sings an old song—'The Field of Monterey,'" exclaimed Dell; "but I shouldn't have thought of coming out here on the Pacific coast to connect it with history. I shall tell her when I return how utterly

stupid I was. And, let me think—why, all this led to the discovery of golden California, didn't it?" archly.

"A curious fact is that war has proved the vanguard of many discoveries," resumed Colonel Ashton. "The military governor called a convention here in 1849, and a constitution was framed and adopted. It was a city of a good deal of importance until it was shorn of its glories as a capital, and has since lost nearly all its prestige."

"The older story has more romance," said Osborne. "It was a great Spanish town in 1770 to 1800. The Franciscan Friars undertook the conversion of the Indians, and taught them to cultivate grain and care for vast herds of cattle. I suspect their existence was a sort of slavery, not always gentle. The missions prospered and grew rich. Then the Spanish cortez, in some trouble with Mexico concerning national independence, ordered the friars to be superseded by the secular clergy. The strong bond of union was broken, and with it vanished most of the Spanish power. So many of the curious old missions about, which were really towns, have strange histories."

Monterey lay facing the sea, drinking in the soft winds that starting in ice fields had been tempered as they kissed Japan and the faraway isles and crossed the ocean; and hedged about at the back by hills, further back protected by mountain ranges, had she not forgotten in this tranquil, enchanting atmosphere all her tragedies? It seemed so. The travelers picked their way through ancient crooked streets, they saw Mexican women sitting in their narrow doorways making lace. Children with dusky skins and soft black eyes ran about chattering a *patois* that sounded very foreign.

And the next day they went to the other extreme, and saw what wealth and taste had added to the sum total of human enjoyment. A spacious hotel set in the midst of a forest, with over one hundred acres of garden, the most magnificent on the Western continent ; fenced in by the primeval forest of towering pines, live oaks, hoary with their soft draperies of moss clinging from limb to limb, others low-spreading, peculiar, and reposeful.

"It is almost equal to the gardens at Kensington," said Alice.

Plots of carpet and ribbon beds in richest variety ; roses that bewildered one ; tropical plants from almost every quarter of the globe. Broad patches, and stray, half-hidden nooks left to wild, luxurious splendor, served to emphasize the exquisite order of other places. Tennis courts and children's playgrounds that rang with happy voices, and a beautiful lake with boats moored invitingly.

"It would be like living in Xanadu, where Kubla Khan

"'A stately palace did decree,'"

cried Dell, her eyes alight with dreamy enthusiasm.

"You have only to wish." A curious, half-perplexing smile crossed Drayton's face.

"Is it all the kingdoms of the world ?"

"Oh, you needn't study me in such alarm !" and now he laughed softly. "If you have to fall down and worship anybody, it will be Mr. Osborne. He gave the order."

"I thought quiet, with nothing to distract us, would be more restful last night," said Osborne. "But now you can drink deep draughts of beauty. Daylight will render it less mysterious."

"I am afraid we shall never want to leave it," sighed Lady Ashton.

Their rooms were delightful. Dell declared it was a waste of time to stay in them, beautiful as they were. After dinner Lady Ashton confessed herself tired, and sent the younger people out to enjoy the evening. There was no moon, but the paths and walks were lighted, and the scene was more enchanting than by day. The air was rich with the blending of innumerable fragrances. Vines trailed long arms of tenderness, as if they were reaching out to all the world. It was such a royal giving that it touched all the generous springs of one's nature, broadened and sweetened the soul.

Reese Drayton always remembered that first evening at Del Monte. He thought he had seen all the things in the world worth looking at for beauty or ugliness. He had found some extremely ugly things interesting, and a good deal of beauty, whether in animate or inanimate objects, vapid, tiresome.

At twenty-five he had been somewhat *blasé*, with the overknowledge of youth. At thirty he had condensed it, and found much of it purely imaginary ; a nutriment to one's vanity merely. There had been no special aim to his life ; no love for any pursuit strong enough to give him an aim. He liked people ; he thought he had a passion for the study of human nature, but the man's criticism on the dictionary always recurred to him with a secret smile—it changed the subject frequently. So did human nature. People came and went. Your curiosity or interest was suddenly extinguished by the blankness of separation. If you met the same people again, the influences between the old time and the present had changed them.

There was in Reese Drayton the strain of two types. An old Puritan ancestry was the farthest back. Later on, some Quaker affiliations. His mother still kept the strain. His father was a man of high principle and elegant tastes. He longed to bring the whole world up to his standard, not so much for the benefit of the world, as for his own gratification. He disdained small things, and had not the far sight or judgment to undertake large ones successfully. But both had died in Reese's boyhood.

Drayton was very well satisfied with the world. He had plenty of money, good health, average good looks, and succeeded in most things he undertook. Yet they had been mostly for his own pleasure and gratification, even those of an intellectual stamp.

When the death of his uncle reached him he was dawdling about London. He would hardly have considered it of sufficient account to inquire into, but for the urgent pressure of the syndicate, for whom the old hermit had died too soon, and in his last days preferred kindred blood to any possible improvement that would benefit his native land. Reese, who had his name, should do as he liked. The lad had, no doubt, run through his father's fortune.

His strong, clean qualities had prevented that. He had good business instincts as well. And when he started to hunt up this Bevis Osborne, who was making a success on a California ranch, and "would tell him just what to do," he found someone quite different from his preconceived opinions, so greatly different, in fact, that he was at once interested. He had not looked to find culture and the refining influences of society on a ranch, though he had investigated life in some of the larger cities and in mining districts.

His attention was as much attracted to Miss Sherburne by her cousin's manner as anything in herself. The extremely youthful assumption amused him. She really was devoted to the young "cub," as he termed Gifford in his mind. Yet she had a curious strength, an individuality that impressed him. Did she like this sort of clinging weakness in a young fellow? He had not found it a girl's ideal hitherto. Older women who had outlived a romance or two sometimes took up the protecting half motherly rôle.

In this simple life, under the tender wing of Lady Ashton, both seemed very young. He guessed Dell about eighteen, from her pretty deference to everyone, her eager, intense enjoyment, her readiness to give of her best. Was her manner society training, or that higher development he had met with on rare occasions? When he saw it he believed in a soul. He did not always do this—he was never quite sure he had one himself.

Gifford's foolish move had really astonished him. The young fellow had not come to ripe enough judgment to know this might pique an older man's curiosity, and bring about the very result he desired to prevent. Gifford, in his mood of angry dissatisfaction, meant to hinder any half flirtation on Drayton's part. He did not know flirtations had lost their zest for the older man. Dell had been attractive to more than one, and Gifford had been half in love with her since that summer and autumn at Sherburne. He felt he owed her all love, all devotion. He had never dreamed of being her lover, still he was very glad Leonard had not been the fortunate one. He was satisfied to have her engaged to Bertram Carew. But he believed he ought to be her best loved cousin. Leonard did not need her now; Ned was too

young—and he couldn't imagine him attracting Dell. Archie—well, he had plenty of friends and interests. No one needed Dell as much as he did. He would hold her by that chain of the past, the necessity of loving.

He did not realize that he was selfish and had gone almost to the cruel side of jealousy. Neither did he imagine he had meddled with what was not his province even as a warning.

It was not likely to do harm, but it deepened Mr. Drayton's interest in the young girl. How delicate they had all been about this matter. He had not heard a word of jesting or any laughing, teasing reference. Was it the very sacredness of the affair? He hoped so. But he wondered what the lover was like. They had known each other a long while—was it really mutual selection or merely "blind contact"? Half the world fancied itself in love, and awoke to cruel disenchantment. He hoped she would be blind always. He did not want to think of her as being disappointed, or brooding over life's bright broken dream.

They walked through the magical paths with no special design. The two girls together, then widening to four, falling back a little, then Osborne and his wife, and Dell and Drayton. They compared as travelers are wont to do. This suggested such a place, there a delightful experience was recalled. They passed other wanderers in these elysian bowers—not a few were lovers. Would Miss Sherburne like to walk here with her heart's desire?

Miss Sherburne was very bright and animated; quoting bits of poetry and amusing sayings, with just enough sentiment to keep her from being trivial.

The bells were ringing out the hour.

"That can't be eleven!" exclaimed Alice, in consternation. "Why, we have lingered in an enchanted land. We have forgotten everybody. Let us hurry back, if we haven't lost the way."

They did make a mistake or two. In the hall they wished each other good-night.

"I feel as if I had been dreaming," Dell said. "I shall always remember this wonderful evening."

The soft brown eyes were lustrous with happiness, content. Would her lover like to see them?

No one had taken any harm. Colonel Ashton had been dissipating in the library, and just come with his mind full of facts and legends stretching back into the centuries. Lady Ashton had been dozing.

Dell went to her room. It was late, to be sure, and an hour would make it later still. But Bertram must see the marvelous pictures before the sights of to-morrow dimmed them. "We must come here on our holiday," she wrote, and when he read it he thought all of life would not make a holiday long enough for the enjoyments she was laying up. He smiled over it, too. For she planned work on the same scale, with the rapture of youth.

The party had planned to go round the peninsula, and down to Carmelo Bay, to visit the old mission. The beaches, the numerous places of resort, the little indentations and points would be full of interest.

"Will it prove the old adage that the longest way round is the surest way home? A five mile drive would take us to Carmelo."

"Your true tourist takes no note of time," and Osborne looked up at his companion with a touch of amusement.

"Do you want to get there first?" asked Dell mischievously. "Remember what befell Little Red Riding Hood."

"I should like to be a month getting there. I could idle away days and days, and perplex the syndicate. Perhaps it wouldn't be a bad idea."

"Pacific Grove is to be our next halt for the night. There is a sail on the bay, a visit to the old Fremont forts, the new town of Monterey, and by that time we shall have our notebooks full of legends. We shall stop and talk Spanish with the lace-makers, look at the queer little gardens tucked behind the rocks, throw nickels to the children, and imagine ourselves in Spain."

"I have never been to Spain. That is one of the things to come," answered Dell.

"But you have owned estates there. Confess now?"

Drayton questioned her with eyes that brought a quick color to her cheeks, yet she did not turn away.

"They were not as far off as Spain. I didn't know much about such estates then," and there was a vague remoteness in her smile that indicated some delightful remembrance within. "I called them dreams. I thought I should have to work hard to make them come true. And the loveliest of all was that they came true without any effort on my part."

"You were fortunate."

"Yes," with a joyous laugh.

Was it about her lover? Did she *wish* for him? Then Drayton colored himself, with a feeling of condemnation. What right had he to peer into this young girl's soul?

"And there is nothing left to wish for. All young lives are not so complete."

"There is a great deal left to work for. Mr. Drayton, don't judge me altogether by this holiday. It would be ungracious to my cousin here, to my friends over there,"—nodding her head eastward—"not to have a good time. And how can one help it when one is happy?"

"Happiness is not such an every-day blessing that one is often bored with it."

"Bored!" Dell laughed with an incredulous cadence, musical and piquant as well.

"I think I have seen people bored with too many of the good things of this life;" in an assertive tone.

"Oh, why couldn't they give some of them away!"

"Perhaps there was no one in need at hand," he suggested.

"The people at hand might not be the right ones, either. Mr. Drayton, there is going out to those in need. There is always someone in want of everything. Not mere money——"

She paused and flushed. Osborne was coming toward them smilingly. She did not feel quite safe on this ground.

"If you are ready for your sail——" questioningly. "Mrs. Osborne and the baby decline to risk their precious lives. Lady Ashton——"

She and the colonel joined them. "I take every opportunity of this kind," she said. "It is such a treat to one living inland. You will go, Lyndell?"

The beautiful bay was a picture for an artist. Out beyond were the ocean and the isles of the sea, the gateway to the opposite world. The men talked of China and Japan, and it seemed so near. She looked inland over the long beaches, the crest of a great ridge that shone in splendor as the sunlight tipped the pines

with a metallic glow, to be reflected again in the shining blue of the water.

"Oh," Dell exclaimed, on her return, "I thought of Violet and Mr. Amory. I wish he would come out and drink in the inspiration. And don't you remember what a gift Ethel had for painting? She never touches a brush now. I half said to Mr. Drayton an hour or two ago I had nothing to really wish for, and out there on the bay I almost sighed for, and would have been content with, what she so carelessly throws aside. All my artistic soul was stirred. I suppose one can have the soul or the longing, without the deft fingers or the fine brain to embody it. And now, what next?"

They took a carriage instead of train, the drive was so short and so full of beauty. Even the baby laughed and talked in his unknown tongue. They loitered and paused here and there, and it was mid-afternoon when they reached Pacific Grove, nestling in the shadow of countless pines, with hoarse rushing breakers coming half across the world to try their strength with the rocks at her feet. Had they vanquished them in ever so slight a degree through the long centuries of warfare? There was Point Pinos with its old granite lighthouse, and the northern end of the peninsula dotted with rocky islands, drenched by the spray dashed high up on the mainland. No mere prettiness was this, but the awe and grandeur of inspiration.

They could have lingered days. At every turn there was something new. Even for so old a traveler as Drayton there were views that startled him by their bold originality. And he knew he had never enjoyed a party more keenly. The cordial enthusiasms of Lady

Ashton, which were discriminating as well, gave a tone of youthfulness that was very charming.

"But I *did* renew my youth," she said laughingly, when the Colonel teased her a little. "I am quite ready to believe in reincarnation. What is that but a new living, with the added richness of the past experiences?"

"But the high priests do not teach exactly that. We cannot remember our past. There is a vague impression that we have seen this or that, but the point we want to establish eludes us with tormenting persistency."

"I am going to take my reincarnations in this body," glancing up with a charming air of defiance, as if it would be useless to argue on the illogicalness of the conception. "I had a delightful youth in England. The years were so long and full that when I look back it seems a complete life. Then marriage and India, which was strange and new, joys, sorrows, misfortunes, and tenderest love,"—meeting her husband's eyes with exquisite trust. "While I do not desire to live it over again, I would not relinquish the memories for worlds. When we crossed the Arabian Sea and left the weirdness of the Asian world behind us, that period was finished. I was not going back to youth, though I might find traces of it everywhere in the dear land we called home. I made myself ready for a kind of autumnal gloom, for the deeper touches and shades of time. And here I am in the gorgeous Indian summer of life, with a daughter to indulge my whims, a pretty grandchild to spoil, an old husband who has time to play the lover again——" She flushed and smiled.

"You go beyond these young folks in romance——" said the colonel gravely, yet with a sense of amusement.

"If we could all reincarnate our lives as delightfully as that in the one existence! You are fortunate, Lady Ashton," returned Drayton. "It is curious how near and yet remote events seem! Sometimes I feel as if I had lived a hundred years, yet little things come back as if the experiences were only yesterday."

"Then I must have lived a thousand."

They all laughed. The pink in her cheeks still seemed so pretty and girlish, and the soft eyes had a tender brightness.

"Are there any other reincarnations?" Drayton asked, glancing at the younger women.

"Oh, I am living my first life! I don't seem to have had any other," confessed Alice gayly.

There were a few things in it sweet to remember. Love and content had crowded out the dissatisfactions. The present joy was a great deal to Alice. Her husband and baby outweighed all other ties. She would have been content in a desert with them, but instead it was paradise.

"Now it is Dell's turn," said Mr. Osborne.

"I think I have been reincarnated." Dell laughed with a little embarrassment. "I have lived a good many lives, but I am not half through. At least, I should, be sorry to have passed the middle milestone. I love to live."

She looked so. There was an exultant strength in every movement, a joyous acceptation of each day and hour. Yes, she was quite a study. What had her past been? Not the mere circumstances of it; but had she come to any deep inner life? Reese Drayton would like to know how it fared with her later on. Where was she likely to live? He would never have any excuse

to go down in Virginia, where he might stumble over her accidentally. He was too well bred to allow his curiosity to trench upon impertinence.

"If we ramble around in this manner, we shall spend one life here. Perhaps we might trade for Point Pinos Ranch!" Osborne suggested. "There is a very good road, and we had better start to-morrow morning. Indeed, if we were energetic we might reach Pescadoro Beach. Then we can take the coast road or a steamboat. The ladies will like the sail best, I think. We shall only have time for Santa Barbara, then across the mountains and up home. We cannot explore the whole world in one brief tour."

They had a delightful evening at the hotel. The ladies remained indoors. It had blown up a little cool with the ocean breeze, and the crackling oak fire on the wide old-fashioned hearth was a picture of delight as well as comfort. And they were rather surprised to find the place a kind of intellectual center.

"We certainly do not realize at home how rich and varied life is here," said Dell, with enthusiasm, when she had made one of a bright group, who seemed to have come from everywhere and were comparing notes. Even Ethel would have had to bring out her best to keep a standing among them. Alice was not at loss; indeed, Dell thought she had seldom seen her more attractive.

The next day they kept to their prearranged route, in the face of the most fascinating temptations. The woods seemed to have softened to absolute Southern tenderness. Flowers everywhere in wildest profusion, the voices of birds, the faint lapping of the distant ocean, and the sun that seemed to scatter laughing lights for

very joy. The great sand hills, with the beautiful long beaches between, and Seal Rock, with its hundreds of soft-eyed denizens tumbling about, hardly afraid of tourists, the pretty pebble beach, where they must gather some curious stones, and at last the old Carmelo Mission, where the co-workers in the cause of religion lie buried, and the faithful still come to pray over them or to them.

The sun was just dropping down in the mighty ocean. What a day it had been ! A day to remember !

CHAPTER IX.

UNREASONABLE HUMANITY.

"IS it only a fortnight?" cried Dell, after her return, as she sprang lightly across the generous porch, and glanced in the room that had a home-like look to her in spite of its brief association. "Oh, the world is lovely everywhere! How hard it would be to make a choice! How good that places are often chosen for us by circumstances!"

She was a little burned by the sun and wind, but her light step; her free inspiriting carriage, as if she was instinct with life and enthusiasm in every pulse, as she was; her shining eyes, that were nearly always soft and lustrous now, she was so seldom angry; and her smile that was the sweetest thing in the world, Gifford Lepage thought, made a picture of her.

"Are you quite satisfied with the circumstances? Wouldn't you change?" he asked with a certain intentness.

"California is so hopelessly healthy," she laughed. "The natives live forever. We have found them weasened and dried up, and shrunk to skin and bone, looking a hundred at least, and carrying loads a spirited mule would refuse. Only the effete civilization from the East come out here, pale and wan, in search of the health society has drained out of them."

"It is splendid, of course. Santa Barbara is lovely, and Lake Tulare magnificent. Did you go to San Rafael?"

"Lady Ashton and I did. There must be some new adjectives made immediately. I have exhausted the stock of old ones. And were you very lonely?"

Gifford gave a little shrug and just wrinkled his nose. As if she needed to ask!

"It was best that someone should stay."

"You look—rested," she ventured.

"I had it pretty hard while they were over at San Borendo, and I've been taking it easy."

"I am glad you've seen so much of it. We can talk it over. I'm prouder of my heritage than ever. And I can't help thinking what a grand thing it is for men to come out here and build cities, and plant vineyards and orange groves, and have great ranches, with fields of grain, and flocks, and herds. If I were a man, with all my life before me, it is what I would do."

"Is *he* going to do it?" nodding over his shoulder to an adjoining room, the only real business room in the house. Osborne and Drayton were in there looking over the stack of letters.

"Mr. Drayton? No, I don't believe he will."

"I thought maybe between you and Bevis you might convert him;" with a sharpened intonation.

She would not notice the touch of sarcasm.

"He has too much money. It is of so little account to him, that he cannot understand of how much account both he and it may be to the world. He is quite spoiled by it."

"I should like to be spoiled in that way. And I supposed you would be"—what should he say?—"very much taken with him."

"He is a delightful traveling companion. He has seen so much, he knows so many quaint and lovely

things—legends of old places, poems, and all that. He is not very much interested in human nature in the aggregate, and he doesn't care for the improvement of the world. He thinks it always goes on about the same, that being set in motion in the beginning, it will need no further help. I believe the thing I like best in him is his music."

There had been no violin on the way, and one could not imagine his playing minstrel before promiscuous audiences. Gifford drew a rather comforted breath—not that he had expected Lyndell to be captivated.

"And now this other will come to him. There were three syndicate letters, and two from the railroad company. He doesn't need the money, and those who do, have to go without or get it by the hardest," said Gifford grudgingly.

"The endeavor and hard work may be valuable in shaping their character."

"Nonsense! They work hard for the money, and get shaped afterward, according to the sphere they occupy. There's nothing very heroic in money-making, except the persistence."

"I am glad you think so."

"I want it for all that."

"I thought you had other ambitions!"

"So I have. But you come back to the hard fact that you can't do anything without money. If I go East I must take up some business while I am studying. It would be whatever I could find, not what I would like. I should be near you all;" with a longing in his voice.

Dell felt the wistfulness in his eyes. If she could say, "Come back, and we will all befriend you." But if it was coming back to temptation, to discontent, to the pain of seeing others preferred to himself! He had not grown

and strengthened, as she had hoped. Yet he had two fine ideals of upright manhood before him. Was it really Christian manhood? She could think of no one quite so true as her dear Dr. Carew, who was to be her father and friend in all the years to come.

"Gifford, you have changed a great deal. You have not taken hold of the sure support, as I hoped you would. There is something to seek first, and I think you have let the desire go."

"It would have been different if I had had you to talk to, Dell. Letters can never say the same things—or perhaps you have lost the key to the real meaning. And I suppose I ought to change. I wasn't such a shining light that I need to keep to the boyhood's folly," he cried impatiently.

"Oh, not that!" with pained entreaty.

"I shall not make such a fool of myself a second time. Whatever comes, you may depend upon me there;" and the young fellow flushed deeply. "But you know that now you have a new interest. You will care less and less for me. Don't I see it in Alice? It's all right enough, I suppose. If there was someone to love me supremely, I should be so brimful of satisfaction that I couldn't think of anyone else. Yes; I did notice it in your letters, and there's something that will always stand between. I've resigned myself to that. But I would like to be next, I should like to feel that you were taking a vital interest in me, that any chance interest that came along would not dislodge me."

"Oh, you know that, Gifford! Perhaps it is not always possible to give the same amount of time and thought to one person where there are several demanding similar attention."

Was it possible that he had been jealous of Bertram? All winter the tone of his letters had been slowly changing, growing rather despondent and doubtful, and even here—— She flushed with the sudden knowledge. How could he think she would come to care in a few days for even the most fascinating person, while her heart was elsewhere? Did he believe she could be guilty of such insincerity? She felt hurt, indignant.

"I don't know as I am worth any fervent interest," he said, with a softness that was not penitence, and yet touched her. "I must be strong enough to stand alone, strong for myself."

"None of us can be that strong," she said gravely. "But we have assistance promised in the hour of need. Gifford, I thought—I hoped you had taken hold of that Greater Strength."

Gifford pressed his foot hard against the column that upheld the piazza roof, as if it was a test of some kind of strength. His face reddened. He couldn't find any strength outside of himself now, unless some resolute human friend stood there. He had been away from the family so long that they had become indifferent. He had hoped a good deal from Lyndell's visit, and this was proving a very swaying reed.

"You can't always see things in the same light," he said rather sullenly. He did not exactly disbelieve in God, but he did wonder nowadays how much he had believed. The sun shone on the just and the unjust, and both were prospered, both were alike unfortunate. He was beginning to think, with the unreason of youth, that the just man oftener had the worst of it—the sharp, shrewd man was prospered.

"I want you to try with your whole soul to see them

in the true light. And, Gifford, whatever any sister, any friend, can do for another, I shall always be willing to do for you."

Somehow he could not make the appeal he had desired. He ought to talk a good many things over. Would she be disappointed that he was not making religion the greatest thing of his life? Really, he could not see it in that old boyish light. Girls went to religion naturally, and in the stress of any great trouble, one turned to anything that promised help and comfort. He should always regret that misstep of his youth. He had more sense now; he had more will and power to with, stand temptation. There was no way of overliving it like being successful—making money. There was a good deal of cant talk about the higher virtues, but money outweighed them all.

The baby ran out on the porch. He was walking nicely now, but he had taken the fever of life as well, and generally ran, never dreaming of the many steps between this and the end of the journey. Then he said "Dell!" in such a fascinating manner, that she caught him in her arms and kissed him rapturously, glad to break the uncomfortable talk. Gifford sauntered out on the path, dissatisfied with himself. Why could he never go directly to the point? He had hoped Dell would pave the way for his return. He thought she would be glad to have him where she could watch his progress. But she was so engrossed with everybody—and, of course, she would repeat Alice's domestic life. But he must make some start toward the fortune he meant to have. He could make it alone, he thought, with a swelling heart.

Reese Drayton sat out on the porch with the two men, smoking. He would rather have had some music on

this last evening, but the ladies were tired, he knew, even if the tour had been pleasant. He should stop a while at San Borendo, and then go on to the famed Yosemite, that he had not seen in seven years. Some time he should come back to the Osborne Ranch, when the longing for a home feeling was especially strong upon him. There was such a charm about these people that he did not mean to lose sight of them: the war-worn veteran and his lovely wife, this fine, manly, progressive Osborne, and the charming young mother. His life was beginning to look barren and fruitless What could he put into it?

When he did return,—in six months or a year later, perhaps,—Miss Sherburne would have gone her way, and married the man of her choice. She was such a fine, attractive girl, with the enthusiasms of youth that took shape in strenuous usefulness. He doubted if she would make as comfortable a wife as her cousin. Probably he would never see her again. One's little bark crossed so many lines out on the ocean of life; they passed by and were forgotten—ah, no, he could recall some other meetings that still lingered in his memory.

The next time he went abroad he would go down to Trenholme Court, and talk her over with them all. It would be quite a passport.

As for the young fellow, he would like to knock the nonsense out of him, and keep him from tormenting Miss Sherburne with his cousinly sentimentality that was a jealous half-love. He was secretly glad she had a defense against it.

"I must make my adieus to-night," he said, as they were separating. "I shall be off early in the morning, and it would be cruel to rouse the household. Then, I

have an objection to morning partings. How much I have enjoyed your charming friendliness and hospitality I cannot put into words ! I shall have to found a ranch of my own, and invite you to come and enjoy a bachelor's quarters, and suggest all the lacks and needs, and I will do my best to supply them. At present accept my sincerest thanks for the many delightful hours you have given me."

"Come and return the visit while you are making the ranch ready," replied Osborne, with the friendliest of smiles. "And believe that we shall miss you as well. You may be sure of a hearty welcome any time."

The good-bys were not those of people who never expect to meet again. Osborne was deeply interested in Drayton, and he had a presentiment that this would not be the last of the rather oddly begun friendship. Dell uttered a very earnest farewell, but she supposed it was for all time. Even in New York, or traveling abroad, one might never meet, if one's desires and aims and work lay in a different direction. He had none, it seemed, and had outgrown the pleasure of society in general. Her life would have a good deal of earnest purpose in it presently, as well as work.

Still, it was curious how much they missed him. How had he come to make such a deep impression ? The colonel quoted him ; Lady Ashton remembered bits of odd talk about people and history and legends of places from one end of the world to the other.

"How many reasons for liking him !" laughed Alice. "His tender, heart-moving playing, and some notes in his voice haunt me. Bevis, did you really get to know what was inside of him ? There seemed a little of everything on the outside."

"He has plenty of common sense. I haven't so great a faculty for analyzing people."

"Dell, it is your turn. I love my love with—do not say m——"

"I can extol him for one thing, the very last. I supposed he would repeat the old platitude of hoping that we would meet again, somewhere, but he did not. It is one of the current phrases, but I always wonder how much it means. So you see I couldn't have made much impression on him."

"Are you on the lookout for new worlds to conquer?" asked Osborne, with gentle raillery.

"If I had been I should have met with defeat," she answered, with a sweet-humored smile.

Gifford colored, and bent his head lower over his paper. He was glad he had warned Drayton; he had felt uneasy over it until now. He had a misgiving that the man despised him for it.

In spite of Drayton's departure, matters did not roll back to the first serene current. Dell was sweet and cousinly, but something was lacking. Was it because Gifford had begun to neglect the more serious aspects of life? spiritual, she would have said. He listened in a half-doubting fashion, and left her earnest pleading unanswered. What could she do for him? She was more disappointed than she had thought possible. He was a little moody, often silent, with a hurt expression more irritating than if he had shown himself really wounded.

But there were so many new things to keep her entertained: An influx of guests and riding parties to every point of interest, then a visit to a neighboring fruit and flower farm that filled Dell with wildest delight. Acres of roses, beds of mossy green violets, with no

soldiers of purple bloom rearing their hoods of fragrance, yet you could almost breathe the remembered sweetness. And afar, all manner of gorgeous field flowers.

"I don't know how one can come back to commonplaces," Dell said. "Brick and stone in rows and rows, and a tiny square of grass—or, perhaps, none at all."

She was to take that and give up the richness of the earth. Sherburne House was suddenly invested with a charm that sent a pang to her soul. She had done this for love's sake—would she always be satisfied?

"I never could enjoy a city again, save for a visit," declared Alice. "I like the wide expanse, the long, free breaths. Though my ideal never was a city." Was Ethel happy in all her splendor, with no clinging baby arms?

There were letters from Mr. Drayton, with bits of half-satirical humor. He and the syndicate had come to terms. The enterprise of these people fairly took his breath away, and made him seem a cumberer of the ground, like the old ruin he had retained. And now what should he do with this money, and these acres and acres of idle ground, unless he set about building a rival town and planting vineyards? If Osborne were not so firmly rooted to the soil he would offer him a chance to immortalize himself by founding one. He was not a philanthropist, the two blades of grass had no especial interest for him; he was not fond of working or thinking; he liked enjoyment and indolently taking his own sweet will. So the other hundreds of acres must lie fallow until someone else came along. These energetic people had their plans well matured, and their tenants engaged. The railroad would soon materialize. But

they needed brains as well as brawn, and some of the directors were anxious for further interviews with his clear-headed, far-sighted friend, Mr. Bevis Osborne.

In the second note he said: "If you feel inclined to push that young brother-in-law of yours ahead, where he will have a fine chance for himself, go over to San Borendo soon."

Gifford was growing more restless and discontented. Dell's visit would be ended presently. He would not ask her assistance in any of his plans, but if she could help others, why could she not make the way easier for him?

She understood it and felt conscience-smitten. She was not spending her income, and that was increasing. She knew exactly what Uncle Beaumanoir would say. He had asked her once if it was her ambition to play Providence? She had suggested to Leonard that something might be found for Gifford, but he replied that a seven years' experience there would be none too long, and a young man could not have a better friend than Mr. Osborne. There was no one to consult but her lover, and he had insisted that the trustees should be her advisers. But in a matter like this his influence would count.

"What perplexes you so?" Dell came up from the shady walk which she insisted ought to be called Karnac—the trees suggested statues to her and the white path desert sand. Osborne still held the note in his hand; he had been discussing a point or two with Alice. The baby lay asleep in a hammock, and she had some sewing in her hand.

"Oh, tell her!" exclaimed Alice. "She feels anxious about Gifford; I am sure he takes his dissatisfactions to her. She has been the repository of all our troubles."

"No wonder you are bowed down with care."

Dell straightened herself with a proud, merry gesture, and threw back her shoulders.

"A daughter of the gods——"

"But not divinely fair," she returned gayly. "About Gifford—if you both thought he might go East——" persuasively.

"I am afraid we both *don't*. There are better chances here than in the overcrowded cities. And though he fancies he doesn't like business, he is really better fitted for it than for a more intellectual life. All he needs is to take hold in earnest. He dreams too much over books."

"And what then?" She would be glad to have the responsibility taken out of her hands.

"An excellent chance over at San Borendo. An energetic young fellow might lay the foundation of a fortune. I suspect Drayton paved the way."

"Do not put it in that light," besought Dell suddenly, her color rising.

"I don't know why——" in half amaze.

"He might like to fancy he is taking a step quite on his own responsibility." She could not confess that he had a little grudging dislike to Mr. Drayton.

"I hadn't remarked so much independence in him. Dell, Alice and I have been rather afraid you would make it easy for him to return. I think he would be disappointed. He has been idealizing the opportunities over there,"—nodding eastward. "He has had a good deal of time for dreaming, and he is old enough now to take up life in earnest. You have to strive for most things—success. When you get to the bottom facts you are amazed at the struggles. And here we should not lose sight of him."

Dell's face lightened suddenly. Then *she* had been puzzling over his future. They both understood that.

"I have two or three commissions to San Borendo. Drayton is a queer sort of fellow, and grumbles that he will have to find new ways of spending money. Few of us have that trouble. Alice and I are saving up the 'ways' until we have the money. Our inventive genius may be excessive," and he laughed. "It always keeps in advance of the means."

"Will Mr. Drayton stay——" hesitated Dell.

"Oh, no! I dare say he is off by this time. He advises me to get in with the new company, and suggests that there would be an excellent opening for Gifford. I'm not too proud to accept anything that comes to hand and pays me for the use of my brains. And I want you to believe we shall do the best for Gifford that we possibly can. I am not vexed at his wanting a life of his own. Still, he wouldn't be a successful ranchman; matters would soon develop loose ends. What he needs is to work under orders a while. That's where a soldier's discipline comes in," and Osborne gave a bright, intelligent smile. "But young America protests against marching in the ranks."

"I am so glad you think it the best thing for him," and her long breath was a sigh of relief.

"I should if he was my own brother. I would push him into any good opening. When a man's own inclinations are not strong enough to make character, and good sharp circumstances force him into it, if he has any metal he is sure to take the stamp. But, Dell, you must not give him too much sympathy at the other end."

"You don't know how glad I am to have someone really care for his advancement—a man, I mean," and

Dell blushed as she glanced at Alice. Then it seemed to reflect upon the other relatives. Playing Providence was not her choice; it seemed to come to her, and her ultra-conscientiousness was at times troubled to know what she might lay down with no misgivings, and what it was wisdom to take up.

Osborne resolved to say nothing about business, but rather insisted that Gifford should accompany him to San Borendo.

"I don't have any good times with you," he remarked fretfully to Lyndell; "and now when there is no one to expect, and nothing important on hand, and we might have some splendid rides and rambles together, I am to be whisked off at a moment's notice. I don't see what Bevis wants of me!"

"You will not be gone long."

"But every day counts, and brings your return nearer. If I could go back with you—I long so to see everybody!"

It was very hard not to give him this pleasure. She did like to make people happy.

"There may be some other opportunity," evasively.

"If I don't go now and begin a new life there, I shall never do it," he said almost angrily. "Every year counts, and I am tired of hanging on here."

He had money enough to take him East; he was not so weak that he could count on burdening her. And if he did ask her for anything, it would be a loan to start him afresh. He had paid her once; he would again.

He turned away impatiently. Were they all leagued against him? Were they bound to keep him from what *he* wanted?

The most delightful part of her visit, Dell ungratefully thought, was the four days the ladies had to themselves.

They did nothing much but talk and compare notes and recall bits of the past. Alice was really growing quite intellectual. Osborne's stronger mind had imbued hers with decision as well as appreciation.

"My wife must not drop behind because we live in a smiling wilderness," he had said.

Colonel Ashton was busy from morning to night, and delighted to have someone read aloud to him in the evening. Perhaps he dozed a little, but he did not quite forget the thread of the discourse.

Gifford returned with an elation he would not own. Reese Drayton had seen an opportunity to speak a good word for both of them, yet he had done it so casually that it hardly seemed his work. They wanted some practical plans, some method of reaching the largest results in the shortest time. Nearly a year had been wasted since the first inception of the project. The nucleus of the colony was growing impatient, and threatening to turn its eyes and steps in other directions. There was a long stretch of timber on the one side; there was a rushy little stream bounding along over its rocky bed for half a year and more; there was land that stretched out indefinitely and needed only labor and brains to make it productive. Brains with experience and intelligence. And this young fellow, who knew a good many things that could be made of practical use, might find his opportunity here. Osborne could not give up much of his time—he was needed at home; but he could supervise.

As if to convince the most doubtful of the boundless possibilities, there was the garden spot of the old hermit, a luxuriant tangle now; a patch of bloom and fruit that was a painting against the gray background of the old

ledge. He had left a sample of what nature could do with very little assistance; as if he had cunningly devised it for the prosperity of his heir, about whom he knew so little.

Still, Gifford Lepage could not decide whether he was thoroughly pleased with the prospect. It was a credit to him to be offered the position, and the salary was generous. There were some advantages, he saw, from being first on the ground, and having Bevis Osborne at his back for influence, at hand for any emergency where his inexperience might fail.

"I suppose I may as well give up other aims and settle myself to money-getting," he flung out disdainfully, as he walked up and down in the soft moonlight with Dell. She should realize his sacrifice.

"But I thought you believed in money-getting," Dell said, with an arch good-humor. "We were talking it over one day——"

"And I said there was nothing like money! I believe it. I have dreamed of being a rich man some time. But I wanted to do it in my own way. There are other things——"

"To seek first." Dell filled up the pause reverently.

"Of course I understand your allusion;" with a stiff sort of dignity. "But you may pray forever, and nothing comes. I've wanted something for this last year—and there's no chance of my getting it in the way I want it. And now I mean to have it some other way;" with stubborn confidence.

"Oh, Gifford! be careful that it is right," she pleaded. The tender old frankness between them that had almost won him that autumn of sorrow and patient ministering to his father, had disappeared. The faith had gone too.

The desire had gone with it. He affected to doubt many things he had endeavored to believe then.

"It is right enough. Any earnest desire to do the best you can for yourself is right enough. And since I can't do what I would, or rather since I can't do it *where* I would, I'll stop and do it here. I'm not such a dolt but I can see a chance to make money. You will all be proud of me yet—as proud as you are of Leonard, even if he has had such a long start in the race."

"We shall be proud of every strong and upright and noble purpose you have. I shouldn't condone any wrong thing Leonard did."

"You like him so much. And Len isn't one bit religious."

Gifford uttered this triumphantly, out of his jealous heart. He would relegate Leonard to his true place.

"I hope to love you all, always." In this mood Dell felt there was no use arguing with him.

CHAPTER X.

NAE PLACE LIKE HOME.

"YES," Bertram Carew said, "I don't indorse the sentiment that it is sad to look at happiness through other people's eyes. I always felt sorry for the poor fellow who said it. And I looked at it all through your eyes. I could see the thousands of brilliant poppies waving in the sunshine, the vines and olives and figs, the luscious berries and apricots and oranges. I could shut my eyes and see you amid it all, and know how glad you were. And one evening I read part of your letter aloud to a poor fellow burning up with fever in a stifling tenement. I think you had been sailing down the Pacific coast. 'Oh!' he said, 'it's like a glimpse of heaven. If one could live in such a land!' And the nights with the exquisite music. That description comforted a woman who had begun life with prosperity and high hopes, and come to sewing on shopwork for a pittance. If we could only send them out to these lovely countries to stay all the rest of their lives, instead of the day or the fortnight we can give them!"

"I am glad if the letters helped you." Dell's eyes were lustrous with tender satisfaction.

"They were a great delight. And you were heroic to write so often, when you had all that seductive world spread out before you. I wonder you didn't get like the bees. When they are taken to a summer climate all the year round, they cease to lay up honey."

"Why, I thought of you continually;" raising her face, where the warm color was enchanting.

He laughed, and kissed down in the rosy softness.

"I wonder if you ever forgot me?"

"I shouldn't know how to go to work to forget. I shut my eyes when I am tired, and see so many pictures of you. I've dreamed a good deal about you on the sofa yonder, with Tessy playing the daintiest, softest music."

"Oh, did you dream of me then?" moved inexpressibly.

"And I had no real right. I was never quite sure but you would belong to someone else. And I think sometimes how queer it was. I was in Columbia College, studying, and you were a little girl going to school right here. I might never have found you in the great city, with the multitude of children going to and fro."

"I am glad you didn't find me *then*. I am afraid you would not have—liked me."

"Someone else found you and kept you, and took you through strange paths and brought you out to the haven——"

"To the haven where I would be," she interrupted. "And I hope we shall be glad all our lives."

"Why, of course, we shall. I hope it will be a long life. I like to think of growing old sweetly and gradually, as my father has. And since heredity often skips over one generation, you are likely to have the long life of the Sherburnes. And all these years, Dell, we must do something that will make our lives worth living, to give thanks for the joy and delight of spending them together."

"I am glad it is a great joy to you," she said softly.

"That would be only half a joy if yours did not meet and mingle with it. I am willing and ready to work, but I am human enough to want the joy with it—all the joys," tightening his arms around her and kissing the sweet lips that throbbed with tenderness. She was ready for all the love here. There could never be too much of it.

It seemed so natural for Mamma Murray to have lovers again. Millicent had come up to welcome Dell home, just a wee brief talk, as she had accepted an engagement at a lovely country seat up the Hudson to make one of a rather literary house party. Dell could have the intervening time at Mrs. Murray's, and then Bertram would go down to Sherbrune House with them.

Morna was abroad having a grand time. She had been to a "drawing room" presided over by the lovely and gracious Princess of Wales, but up in Scotland she had seen the Queen in the happy content of her country life. Morna had been classed among the beautiful Americans. Her exquisite figure, with its graceful movements, her dazzling complexion and rippling golden hair, with the charm of youth and a sunny nature, captivated many a heart; but the mother hoped she would not leave hers abroad. James was established in business to his father's satisfaction, Lawrence had begun to study medicine, but Con had kept to his newspaper love, and was now in Africa writing letters with the fervor of youth.

Mamma Murray took Dell to her heart with all the old-time gladness. As for Dr. Carew, was he not almost like a son? He was welcome any moment. James was a little shy. He wondered if he ever had played under the old apple tree with this tall, imposing girl. He had a curious feeling about her lover, a sort of sacred awe, different

from his friendliness for Dr. Carew. He speculated a little on the kind of girl he should choose when his time came, in all the blissful ignorance of young manhood. Larry was rather gay and offhand, like Con. But baby Densie was the pet and plaything of them all.

Tessy had been up for a delightful visit with her mother, and now they had gone to Sherburne House; Fanny Beaumanoir was abroad with Mrs. Longworth and a gay party; Archie Stanwood had been on duty at Fort Wadsworth, but an appointment had come for Northern Michigan, and he had been trying his utmost to get it changed.

Every bit of news was so delightful to Dell, and sounded just as fresh as if she had not read it in letters. But the whole week with her lover seemed the most enchanting part in her life. He came in as engagements would permit. They had some delightful rambles in Central Park, a few drives up in the country ways that were putting on city aspects so rapidly, and the endless talks that lovers never tire of, the hopes and plans new to each soul that stands on the brink of the promised land.

Yet there was a strange hesitation about it to Lyndell. It was such a wide door opened, this life of usefulness in a great city. She felt as if there must be some special consecration about it, as if it was next to, or even greater in its sphere, than a minister's wife.

"Dell," Bertram said on the last evening, for Milly was to come to-morrow, and they would take the evening train homeward, "Dell, what is that young man you met at Mr. Osborne's going to do with his land and his money? What was he like? Why, he might start in and make a splendid colony."

"You can't imagine it," laughed Dell. "And he isn't young. Down in his heart he doesn't really care for anything—that is, with any vital interest. He has been almost everywhere and seen so much. Sometimes you think it has impressed him, but you never get down to the depths. His uncle lived almost forty years of hermit life on that vast estate—he never did anything with it. Mr. Drayton may live forty years in the world and be a hermit as well. He is pleasant, charming when he isn't too lazy to make the effort, sensible too. He and Mr. Osborne were real friends. What he wants is faith in something."

"A wretched agnostic. But a man ought to disbelieve vigorously. Then there would be some hope of him."

"He isn't wretched. I don't know about the agnosticism. He enjoys everything. He has many fine appreciations. But it seems as if they were in the brain and senses only. Oh, I think his soul has been left out!" laughing as if she had hit upon the true explanation. "But if you could hear him play! Then you would believe he was all soul. That's very contradictory—I do not think I am good at describing people."

"But you go on accumulating wisdom and discrimination. We should be monstrosities if we knew it all at twenty. Dell, imagine it had been my old hermit uncle who died! How long would *we* be building a town—no, a village with spacious yards and gardens and roomy houses where one would not hear the talk of one's neighbor? It does puzzle me at times why the money goes to such people," and a mirthful light irradiated his eyes, making them look like his father's. "Charles Lamb thought it was to show how little value the Lord placed

upon it. But you can't do much without it. The world's family grows more expensive as it gets larger, like every other family. Dell, do you suppose I am envying that fellow?"

"You wouldn't change places with him;" in exultant certainty.

"I wouldn't change places with anyone. I like to be myself, and your lover;" with a glad smile. "And I suppose Gifford felt that the money or the land might be divided up and made to go further around."

"Not very far," glancing up archly. "He would have been willing for it to stop with him. Gifford frets me a little. Mr. Osborne thinks the life has been too narrow for him, though there are people coming and going half the time. The hospitality is charming. Gif had set his mind on coming home."

"And they all thought he had better remain?"

"Uncle Beaumanoir considered it wiser. I am afraid Gifford thought me—not generous or sympathetic;" and her voice fell a little.

"How did he get on with this Crœsus."

"Oh, they didn't get on at all! Gifford appeared mortifyingly young and inexperienced. It is a curious thing, but I fancy Mr. Drayton would make most people—young people—feel inexperienced. Yet he doesn't parade his knowledge. Only nothing surprises him, and nothing is new. I think he must have been alive with the old gods in Egypt or India. I wish you could see him. You might understand him better."

"Why, I should like to. Was he as Oriental as that?" Bertram looked at her with an interested curiosity. "And how did you get on?"

"Very well, when we kept to generalities." She

flushed and looked embarrassed. "I am fond of the soul of things, you know. I can't skim gracefully over thin ice with the utter unconcern of some people; and I don't enjoy anyone smiling at me from the height of superior wisdom. I like earnestness."

"And I love you for your earnestness. That is not your only virtue in my eyes, but I would not have you without it."

They were walking up and down the long room, his arm about Dell's waist, and now her lithe figure seemed to droop and draw a little nearer. It was delightful to be so well loved.

"So we can lay no snares for this rich old young man," he said laughingly. "But I sometimes think of all the land lying waste in the magnificent climates of the earth, and the people crowded in holes and slums. I suppose God is keeping watch and noting these things down in his book. It would break one's heart to believe for half an hour that he had forgotten."

It would be part of her life to remember. She was anxious to do some real thing, as if she had not been the center of many real things all her youthful existence.

Millicent came the next morning.

"I am almost afraid of you," Dell exclaimed, holding her off a little and scrutinizing her smilingly. "You have such an air, and you belong to such high-up people. You even look as if you knew so many things and had lived so many lives. But I suppose you haven't come to believe in reincarnation?"

"Except as every new day is something fresh, and a life not lived before. We have been trying to get along without you, remembering the new life. And, my dear, we *do* miss you. If you were not going to be so very

happy, and fill a larger sphere, and if your place was to be left empty——"

"I couldn't have gone away and left it empty. And is Aunt Aurelia *quite* satisfied?"

"Dell, my darling, you must not feel hurt or pushed aside, or superseded. It is the work of your own hands, and if it has been blessed——"

"I wanted it to be blessed. Oh, Milly, you can't think I would grudge anything—any love?" she interrupted hastily.

"I thought at first I shouldn't like to see Tessy there, the head of everything, until after you were married."

"But it is *their* home."

"I am sometimes jealous," and a tender smile illumined Milly's face. "Those two old ladies would make a 'chair,' such as the boys used to carry us in in our childhood, and carry Tessy in their arms, if she would allow them. They are afraid the unfriendly wind will blow on her, or the sun will scorch her, or the day will not be right, or Leonard won't be devoted enough. It's positively funny! And Len is as proud of it all as you can imagine. He commits her to Aunt Aurelia's care when he stays in Washington over night, and insists that we shall all see that nothing goes wrong. I didn't dream there was so much devotion in him."

Dell's eyes were soft and lustrous. Sometimes she wondered if she could accept this so delightedly but for the great love that had come to her. Dr. Carew asked her once if she supposed the children of Israel stopped to inquire what would have occurred if there had not been the pillar of fire by night. It was there, and needed no questioning. Whether one could be content without, the Lord only knew, and since he gave, he

meant any blessing or satisfaction to be received with thankfulness.

There were so many things to talk about; and in the afternoon a little shopping. Mamma Murray had tears in her eyes as she said good-by to Dell, but it was only for a brief while, she knew. And never had the journey home seemed so short. The longer journeys were fresh in her mind.

Leonard had driven down for them, the elder doctor, too; and Dell felt for the moment that she ought to be duplicated to make each happy. But Sherburne House had the first claim.

Tessy sat out on the piazza with Aunt Aurelia, watching. And if there had been a jealous thought in Dell's heart, it must have perished utterly when Aunt Aurelia took her in her arms and held her in silence, kissing the bright young face with fondest love.

"They are all right at home!" declared Leonard to his sister. "I'll take you back presently, but they are just as likely to drive over here. Oh, Dell, have you any idea how glad we are to get you back? I didn't know but the Pacific coast might have a new and powerful rival."

Dell blushed vividly.

"Only the rival of its marvelous beauty. Tessy, I felt as if the half had never been told. Milly must go out to that land of sunshine and bloom and drink in inspiration with every breath."

"I suppose no one thinks I need to be inspired," exclaimed Leonard, with a pretense of injury in his tone. "Or as to health?"

"You cannot move our sympathies on that score," returned Dell saucily. "And yet it is delightful to see the dear old place and the familiar faces."

She reached over and took Aunt Aurelia's hand.

"And home," said Leonard pointedly. "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem."

Their eyes met in tender recognition. His said it would always be home to her.

It did not seem at all strange to see Tessy moving about with a sweet dignity, the honored mistress, who was to renew the old home and give it the charm and benediction it had not had in years. Dell was more than ever satisfied. Leonard would not want anything changed. His boyish remembrances were more to him than any modern plenishings.

About mid-afternoon Mr. and Mrs. Beaumanoir drove over and surprised them all with Aunt Julia, who did not look as bright and cheerful as usual, Dell thought. She had come up from Fortress Monroe and was going to New York.

"I wish I could have been a little sooner, while you were there," and she gave Dell's hand a fond pressure. "It was some news we heard, and if it could have come before."

"Yes, I had a whole week," returned Dell. Could she have been generous enough to divide it?

She had to talk about Alice and the cunning baby, the household, and the great ranch and Gifford's new opening. Aunt Julia sighed a little. Dell wondered what had happened.

She heard presently. When the sun slipped out of the avenue between the thick pines and firs, they sauntered down by intuitive consent, a presentiment that each wanted the other. She was taller than Aunt Julia, and seemed a tower of strength in her youth and affection.

"Is it true, dear, that you are to be married this autumn?" the elder asked softly, though Dell felt that was not the burthen of her thoughts.

"Bertram thinks I ought to be," with a smile and a flush. "And I have had my year."

"There cannot be a happier marriage. We all love Bertram as if he was our own kin. It will have everybody's heartfelt blessing."

There were tears in her eyes, and her face was not as blithesome as her words.

"Aunt Julia, what is it?" A quick pang shot through Dell's heart. Bertram—but nothing could have happened in these few hours!

"I ought not to cloud your happiness by my sorrow. Laura has been so kind and sisterly, but you will all have to know, and I wanted *your* sympathy, Dell. You have been as dear to me as a daughter."

"Archie!" Dell cried, with quivering lips.

"It is no crime, only a sad misfortune. Archie is married. Dell, if it had been Tessy Murray I should have been the happiest mother under the sun."

"Oh, Aunt Julia!" Dell kissed the tremulous lips, and clasped both hands in hers.

"It does make a great difference to daughterless mothers whom their sons marry. And for this last year I have been counting on Archie's wife. The boys are still so young. I have longed so for a daughter, dreamed of her when Archie's first years of service were ended. I think he will never be quite the enthusiastic soldier his father was, but if there was an earnest call from his country he would be no laggard. He doesn't seem to be in love with peace soldiering. And promotions are slow."

"But—his wife?"

"Oh, my darling, how shall I tell you! He has been married almost two months to the daughter of a defaulter and suicide. If the man's previous record had been good, and he had been overtaken by some sudden pressing temptation, it would have been different. But to have been a thief for years!"

"Oh, Aunt Julia!" Dell's voice was broken with sympathy. "Still, the poor girl—she is not to blame."

"But the mother is. They have been about everywhere, living in extravagant style. The mother and the two daughters were in Washington last winter. A Mrs. March."

"Oh, I can recall them. Very fashionable people. Two extremely stylish girls. The younger is quite pretty."

"Oh! you know them, then? I thought Fanny might have met them, but if so, she had no suspicions. At least, she had never mentioned them to her mother."

"Yes, she was in the habit of meeting them. You meet almost everybody," Dell said, in a quick tone that was not quite approval.

"And their standing? Dell, my darling, tell me the truth. Do you not see that I shall hear it piecemeal, and it may be more unfavorable than your generosity would allow. It is the time when the wound of a friend will be tenderer than that of a stranger."

"Oh, Aunt Julia!" Dell kissed the beseeching face. She wanted to comfort, and believe the best. If she could repay the old time when Aunt Julia had been a ministering angel to her! How could she stab the tender heart already rent by the surprise of Archie's step, and the lifelong disappointment? for Dell knew it would be that.

"Tell me about them—everything you can recall. It will not prejudice me against *her*. I shall be in a sense forewarned."

"I don't know anything to their discredit," began Dell, with a rise of embarrassed color. "Mrs. March was a stylish, rather aggressive woman. She had a relative who was a Congressman from some Western State. She was a good deal interested in politics, and was very attractive to business men."

"Was she invited to Ethel's?"

"No, Aunt Jue, she wasn't." Dell flushed deeply at the admission, but the truth *was* best. "Ethel is quite—well, very select. People come to see Mr. Longworth on business and are asked informally to dinner, but Ethel doesn't invite them to anything afterward. Mrs. March came once about some railroad, I think."

"Was she a lobbyist?" with an accent akin to contempt.

"I don't know. Leonard could tell you."

"But she was a rather pronounced woman?"

"She dressed expensively—not exactly loud;" with a softening smile. "They had rooms at a fashionable boarding house, and she gave several entertainments. We were both invited, and Fanny went."

"Ethel didn't approve?"

"She always revised Fanny's invitations, and it did vex her. There were some very nice people Ethel left out."

"Did you chance to meet Evelyn Westwood?"

"Oh, she is a very fine pianist. She used to play at functions."

"Her mother was my schoolmate. She married very well, and Evelyn was reared in luxury. At her father's death everything was swept away, and she cares for her

mother. They came down for a little rest when the fashionable season was over, and we accidentally renewed our friendship. She seemed to know Archie quite well—but I do not suppose she was in any set."

Aunt Julia gave a sad little smile.

Archie had been a good deal attracted, Dell remembered. He was passionately fond of music. This was one of the acquaintances Ethel had ridiculed him out of.

"Tell me about the girls."

"They were bright and stylish, and considered rather witty. They danced and were fine whist players, and were always going about. I think they were great favorites."

Dell would not say they were the kind of girls men danced and flirted with, and the impression about them was that they were husband-hunting. She had heard some uncomfortable criticisms—sneers, almost. Oh, how could Archie have done such a wild thing?

"Which one has he married?" she asked.

"Helena."

Dell was silent. Helena was the eldest; older than Archie, she knew.

"Is Helena——"

Dell evaded the comparison. "Oh, Aunt Jue! how *did* it happen?" she asked hurriedly. "And the father? He was in New York most of the time. Oh, are you quite certain——"

"It was in all the papers. It was said to be an accident first, from an overdose of chloral that he was in the habit of taking. And a few days after this Archie was married—went to a 'clergyman one evening with her mother's assent. Her sister was married that morning to a man old enough to be her father, and went

to Europe at once. When they looked into Mr. March's affairs the whole disgraceful story came out. He had spent funds intrusted to his care for investment. He had paid people, women in most cases, a high rate of interest on these pretended investments. He had done enough to send him to prison for years, and they had all been living on the stolen gains. It is quite a common story, after all."

Aunt Julia wiped away her tears. Oh, what could Dell say to comfort her?

"When there were so many lovely girls in the world, girls without reproach, with honest parents! Dell, in the account, some very slighting comments were made about Mrs. March. God may visit the sins of the father upon the children, but we have no right, I know. And this Helena March may be an innocent sufferer, an innocent participator in her father's wrong-doing, but oh, I wish she had not come to Archie. Oh, my dear Dell, you see I am not willing to help bear another's burthen. Did I need the lesson, and has God sent it to me for that reason?"

She was sobbing now, with her head on Dell's shoulder. The girl's tender heart ached.

"Dear Aunt Jue,"—using the fond household name,—"it may not be so bad. The world forgets things easily. And as the marriage was quite secret—her name may not even really be connected with her father's crime."

Lyndell shuddered. Archie was so upright and honest, so frank, so full of manly ideals, even if they were but half-perfected. There were all the years in which to grow. They had talked over Leonard, and what a fervent, unselfish love had done for him. Archie adored and honored his mother, and hoped some day to have a

wife who would love them both. Dell could not even imagine Helena March loving a man like Archie. True, he had a youthful fondness for pleasure, but there was much more to his life, his nature.

"It seems to me," began Mrs. Stanwood, with dignity, "that it *is* a wife's place to know whether the money she spends so lavishly is honestly obtained or not. A true wife cannot be kept from her husband's concerns. This man had been grasping at everything. There must have been some sharp turns open to suspicion, when such a course is followed for years. Are the girls very young?"

"They are"—Dell flushed, and half turned from the searching glance—"they are as old as I," laughing with embarrassment. "Am I very ancient?"

"You are generous to your sister-women, and I like you the better for it. Then Archie's wife must be near his own age—older. I suppose they are merely lilies of the field, who have neither toiled nor spun. And when I think of their having lived for years on the money of other people, widows and orphans—oh, Dell, how can I bear it! Even they were old enough to have some thought. Oh, my poor boy, my poor Archie, with your life turned awry at the very beginning!"

"My dear, dear aunt!" Dell clasped her arms around Mrs. Stanwood's neck, and the two wept together. Oh, what could comfort her! Dell knew how she had longed for a daughter, how dear any loving woman would be to her as her son's wife. She could not hold out false comfort. A vain, superficial, society demanding woman, with no home instincts. How had *she* decided to take Archie?

"Where are they?" asked Dell presently.

"In New York. Mrs. March is going to Oregon. She has some relatives at Portland. I do suppose when Archie married, he hoped to get an appointment around New York. His father had a half promise. But this one came at Michigan. He wrote urgently to his father to try and have it revoked, and confessed his marriage. And now, considering it from all points, it will be best for him to go, we have concluded."

Her tone was quite decisive.

"Yes, it will be best," Lyndell rejoined. She could see how a great deal of gossip would be averted. The Marches would fall out of remembrance. If Archie came back no one would connect his wife with the *esclandre.*

"And oh, my dear Dell, I am afraid he regrets the step already. I would rather have him madly, unreasonably in love with her, even if he went through the cruel process of disenchantment. But never to have entered love's magic realm—oh, my dear child, how can I bear it for him? Was he crazy?"

"Oh, Aunt Jue, I don't think the Lord meant you to bear his part." How could she console? Ought not Archie accept his burthen in a manly fashion? Perhaps he really had been caught with some fateful fascination.

"Dell, you will never quite know how much of your soul goes into your children's lives until you have them of your own. Archie has been such a lovely son to both of us. He has counted on the little boys growing up, and what should be done for them. I can't understand. Then he begged me to come up, and—— Did I tell you his father was very angry?"

"Poor uncle!" was the sympathetic response.

"But he decided that I had better go. And he insisted that Archie should accept his appointment, and start as soon as he could make arrangements. Of course I *must* see him. My heart is broken over the matter, but he is my child, and I cannot add to any lifelong sorrow he has prepared for himself. But we were counting on his visiting Sherburne House before you went away. He seems to have barred himself out of everything."

"I don't know ; that might be managed. It is such a sad marriage, with no one to give a word of welcome. Oh, you must not think there is anything discreditable about her—she was a good deal admired in Washington, and she has been abroad. Oh, Aunt Jue, she could not help her father's sin. For Archie's sake, we ought to be friendly."

"You comfort me, you dear girl," and she kissed her fondly. "But oh, how shall I meet them with such an unwilling heart! Pray that I may have strength. When I think of Leonard's courage and manliness——"

The women were very different. But Tessy had her lovely home and her parents to make life delightful, even if she had given up her impetuous admirer. Tessy never would have made any compromise ; Dell's heart exulted in that knowledge. And this other girl was the product of society and boarding-houses.

"As I said, Laura comforted me so much. We have grown nearer and dearer with advancing years. She is so happy in her children. I only hope Fanny won't be drawn into any foolish step."

Dell was very glad to have both her and Ethel away at this juncture. When they heard of it, the story would be old and have lost interest.

Aunt Julia remained all night at Sherburne House, and in the evening the unfortunate marriage was announced. At first Leonard was really indignant.

"Archie should have had more sense ' " he exclaimed sharply. "Those girls have been floating round in society for years. I wonder they haven't picked up husbands before. I think Helena was engaged once, abroad, to some impecunious title. What could he have been thinking of ! And all that horrid scandal ! "

"But you forget the scandal had not come out then, and at first the death was considered an accident. Think how hard it was for the poor girls," pleaded Tessy, her heart deeply moved for Aunt Julia.

"They hurried up mightily, it seems. I'm blaming Archie for being so easily caught. The girls were wise to look out for themselves. There's nothing special about them. They were fond of good times and a crowd of young men around them. Well, they were good company for an hour or so, but it would take more grace than I possess to live with one of them a lifetime."

Dell was glad to see him soften to half indifference. But a moment later, catching sight of the little frown between his brows, she wondered if he was doing it for Aunt Julia's sake. Her heart gave a quick beat. There was a time when Leonard wouldn't have softened an opinion for anyone.

"Perhaps they will find the best in each other, out in that wild country, among half-breed French—and half-bred Americans, shall we say ?" with an inquiring sort of smile. "It may be a good discipline. But, Aunt Julia, you have my sincerest sympathies that he should have married so young. He really isn't as old as his years even, and we do not get much wisdom in the first

few decades. I think I can remember when wisdom had not attacked me with a great deal of force. Indeed, I may have some places not very well fortified yet," and now he gave a cheerful laugh.

"If she loves him," returned Aunt Julia, after a pause. But it seemed to her like the first port in a storm.

Leonard looked over at his sweet little wife, who was leaning against Dell's shoulder. When he wanted to tease her he said he knew she loved Dell the best. He felt suddenly moved. No, he had not deserved this best of all prizes, but he did strive to grow larger and finer of soul. "If she loved him." Could a girl reared as Miss March had been, *love* anyone? And not to be loved with a great and absorbing passion would be like living in a desert. Poor Archie! His heart went out to him.

"Leonard," his wife said, when they had all bidden each other good-night out on the porch, and they were alone, "will you not ask Archie and his wife down here before they go away?"

"Down here?" and she could see the idea had not entered his mind. "Really, why should I? Why should *we?* I do not think either of us was charmed by Helena March. And there were some criticisms on her mother——"

"Very few people have heard of them in this vicinity. Very few people would connect Helena March with the miserable suicide. It isn't for her, but for Archie and Aunt Julia."

"I'm awfully sorry for Aunt Julia. And in a way sorry for Archie that he should have blundered over what ought to be best in a man's life. Angry, too, that he hadn't better sense, for he must have known. He didn't seem so desperately smitten with her. She

dances splendidly, and she plays well. She has a knack of making the most of herself. Well, I suppose experience has given her that ; " rather satirically.

" I think Dell would like it ; " in a low persuasive tone.

" How do you know ? Did she say so ? " with sudden vehemence. " She did not especially like Helena March. She kept in Ethel's good graces by not going to the tea, or whatever it was. And oh, how Ethel was vexed with Fanny ! "

" Dell wouldn't send an invitation to him now, but a year ago her heart and home would have been open to him. She was very fond of him. I want you to keep up the same kind of generous hospitality. And it is still her home."

" I will ask her. She shall do what pleases her."

" No, you must do the asking. Send *your* invitation to-morrow with Aunt Julia. Do not even consult Dell. She would hesitate."

" Have you two been hatching a conspiracy ? "

" We have not said a word about the invitation. Only I know Dell so well, and it is what she would do."

" To tell the truth, I disapprove of the marriage altogether. I should be sorry to give Mrs. Archie Stanwood the slightest claim upon us." Leonard began to pace the floor impatiently. His pride was touched.

Tessy stood still in the soft half lights, her sweet face full of resolution, and yet she did not raise it to him as he passed her. Then he added :

" I know the whole crew better than you do—or Lyndell."

" And if someone had objected to me——" Her tone was very soft, not accusing.

He flushed deeply. "Tessy, you make me angry with such allusions. If your mother had lived apart from your father half the time, and hobnobbed with anyone who had influence enough to forward her husband's detestable schemes, or brought all her powers of persuasion to forward other schemes as reprehensible; if your father had been spoken of as a sharp and a skin, and done dirty work because some man or party paid him well for it, I couldn't have cared for *their* daughter. They could not have had one who would have attracted me. You're such a meek little thing, always putting yourself in some unfortunate's place."

The color came and went in her face. Then he suddenly folded her in his arms.

"You are a little white angel," he declared, "and I am a big despot. And you don't mind me a bit more than if I was a common mortal!" in a complaining but tender tone. "Only you are the peer of everybody,"—compelling her to meet his dark, fervent eyes.

"I have heard that every American woman is a queen," she replied, with quiet humor.

"And so you get your way without crown or scepter. Well——" He made a wry face, as if it was a hard thing to do.

"For Archie's sake; he is your cousin. For Dell's sake, that she may have nothing to recall under her cousin's roof that it would not be pleasant to remember—that she would wish had been different."

She reached up to kiss him, and he held her in his arms, feeling her loving heart beat against his.

"Aunt Jue," he said at breakfast the next morning, "will you take an invitation to Archie from me? We should like to see him at Sherburne House before he goes away." He dropped an unsealed note beside her plate.

CHAPTER XI.

BETWEEN THE LINES.

"OH, Len, how more than cousinly, how kind in you!" Dell said, and the light in her brown eyes was like sunshine. Aunt Julia's were soft with grateful tears, as she raised them to her.

They had said nothing to Aunt Aurelia or Miss Carrick about the unpleasant features of the incident. They could all agree that it had been a very foolish step on Archie's part, especially as he might have three years at some outpost, removed from the social amenities that would render life more agreeable to a young bride. The marriage had been hurried by the death of her father and the departure of her mother for the West.

"It is quite wonderful how many pleasant things one can find to say even in bad cases," exclaimed Dell, with smiling archness. "I don't suppose it is wrong not to tell the other side when it can subserve no wise purpose either as a warning or an example. But it is a puzzle sometimes to tell where truth should end and prudence begin. Since they are going away, we will speed the parting guest with the best wishes. It is not insincere to wish the best for them?"

"Since we ought to wish the best for everyone," returned Tessy softly. "And one's own household is near, if it is not always the household of faith."

"Then it is our duty to have faith for them."

Leonard was glad when he received Archie's note, thanking him and accepting. "You don't know what it will be to me to carry away this remembrance of Sherburne House, and of you all," he replied.

Leonard was beginning to be faithful in a few things as master of Sherburne House. It had responsibilities beyond keeping up the estate and the care of those who came with it.

Leonard drove over for the guests. Young Mrs. Stanwood was toned down by her mourning, which was lightened as much as good taste would admit. She was five-and-twenty, but she could have left off the five among strangers who could not count up her seasons. She had a pretty, lissome figure. Where nature had not been kindly, art had remedied the oversight. Her complexion was judiciously assisted, her hair had been kept in girlish lightness, though it could hardly be called golden. Her eyes were quite dark, bluish, and veiled by long lashes. Her features were fairly regular. You almost wondered what kept her from being very pretty, and yet you would have only applied passable to her.

She had all the graces of society, and knew how to make the most effective use of them. But there was a suggestion of artificiality about her. Women or girls seldom chose her for a friend; perhaps she would have been bored by such a proffer.

Already she had been disappointed in her marriage.

"There is absolutely nothing else to do," her mother had said sharply. "You have let better chances slip, and though you look young, I suppose you are aware girlhood has passed. I should snap up the young fellow. He is well connected, and if he gets a nice appointment you will at least have someone to take care of you. I

can't do it. I don't see how it happens you girls have hung on so. I was married at nineteen."

Helena March had asked herself why it was. The offers that had come to her had not been worth taking. She had set out to marry a rich man, but the two who had bowed to her charms were old and objectionable. She had been engaged abroad, mostly for the sake of the prestige; she had spent seasons in New York, at the West, and in Washington. Other girls had married well. There had been some almost opportunities that she would have accepted if they had materialized.

"There will not be a dollar for us," her mother had said, the day after her father's death. "It was simply your father's energy and shrewdness that kept us going. Addie is quite sure of Mr. Trainor. I wish you were as sure of Lieutenant Stanwood."

If Archie had not been in the city he might have been saved the unfortunate step. But he made a call of condolence. He thought he had never seen her look so pretty as in this simple white woolen gown with black ribbons.

All was in confusion. Would he excuse her? A dressmaker was in the house. How dreadful to think of clothes at such a time! They were all so shocked. Of course it was purely accidental. Papa had used chloral for pain and sleeplessness. But it was so terrible!

She cried on Archie Stanwood's shoulder. He had a big, tender, loving heart, and he always wanted to help people in trouble. Helena was aware of this tendency, and begged him to come in again. She was so lonely and miserable. They were away from all their friends. They really knew so few intimately here in the city.

He came in every day. He brought her flowers, sweet sympathetic white ones. He heard that Addie was to be married and go abroad; and Helena shivered at the unsuitableness. She could not have cared for any one so old, but what were they to do?

If he had been less honest and unsuspecting! If he had been less easily blinded by the sort of halo with which she surrounded herself. If his proffer of sympathy had not been so eagerly caught up and made to mean something quite different! He was too manly to draw back. Did he want to, even if he was surprised at himself? Her mother planned to go away—Addie was to be married—if they could be married at the same time—or would he rather have a long engagement? In that case she must go West with her mother, and oh, how could she part with him!

He was so young and inexperienced that he thought a woman's love the most sacred thing in the world. He would rather have waited and dreamed over it, approached the solemn sacrament with the reverence it demanded. But to make her unhappy—to give her the long separation——

There had been ugly suspicions and rumors about Mr. March, indignantly denied by his family. When he heard them substantiated that morning, he shuddered, thinking over the marriage at noon. How could he prove recreant in this time of sorrow?

He upbraided himself for his heavy heart. They went down to the steamer to see Addie and her husband start, and he envied them.

"If we were going!" he said. He felt he would like to go out of it all. The disgrace was a bitter thing to his upright nature.

"I would rather have you and stay here, than a journey with——" Anyone else, she was going to say, but her devotion did not go that far.

He thought he understood.

"Yes," with a fond pressure on her arm.

Mrs. March went away. Archie took his wife to a quiet boarding-house. She was thankful for the shelter of a safe home and a loyal husband. She could hide from the storm. It was so much worse than anyone had imagined. Archie waited a fortnight before he had courage to announce to his father his reasons for not wishing to go to some far, uncongenial post, and begging him to use his influence with friends, if possible. And the result had been his father's anger and a positive refusal to interfere; not even asking him to come for a good-by. Then Archie had written a moving letter to his mother, and her tender heart had yielded. Was he not her first-born, her well-loved boy? And did he not need some kindly interest in his new life?

Archie Stanwood was amazed and perplexed. It was his habit to idealize women, or at least, measure them by those he had known best among his relatives. Helena had been very demonstrative and sweet at first. She could get up a certain amount of enthusiasm at will; it gave her a specious brightness. She liked Archie when she had danced and chaffed with him; his very simplicity had amused her, touched her as well. Had she ever been as young, as credulous, as full of faith as that! But in her terrible anxiety about the future his strength and honesty seemed a sure dependence. The family counted with her, and Archie's position was better than that of a clerk. They might all be vexed at first, but these things blew over. She had a horrible fear of

being thrown upon her own resources. She had no especial gift except her playing, and that was showy rather than thorough. She had not her mother's dash and energy, and to struggle along with poverty looked too forbidding. So she acted on her mother's suggestion and won, trusting luck for the future.

But when there was no dancing, no round of teas and receptions and drives, no prospect of a gay summer hotel, no prospect of anything but dreary Michigan wilds, her heart sank within her. She had no resources for solitude. She cared little for reading, unless it was some highly wrought-novel ; fancy work bored her. She had painted a little when everybody was wild over plaques and panels, but she had neither the requisite patience nor love. Society, promenades, drives, and attention was all her life. Archie's admiration was crude, boyish, and its very sincerity began to irk her. It was not an easy thing to live with a sincere person, she found, a person who had ideas of duty and was resolutely bent on living up to them. How would it be for years and years, out on a frontier post ? She was almost sorry she had decided so hastily. She might have gone West with her mother.

" Couldn't you resign and get something else to do ? " she asked him.

" Not now." Indeed, he would rather get away from the shadow of disgrace, though he would not have given that reason.

She was listless and uninterested. The city was dull of course at this season. There were the theaters, but she found Archie had a sense of propriety not to be overruled. He might not be as manageable as she had believed.

It was a sad, sweet delight to Archie to see his mother

Never had she seemed so dear. Leonard's letter touched him to the quick. Perhaps he had been morbidly brooding over matters.

"I don't know"—hesitatingly. "I should like to see them all so much, since we are to be gone for a long time. But, mother dear," studying her wistfully to see if she approved.

"Is that where your cousin Miss Sherburne lives?" asked Helena. "And of course I know the Beaumanoirs. Fanny and I were great friends. But she is in Europe now. Oh, yes, let us go! It is so unutterably stupid here."

Stupid with her husband, and only a few weeks married! Nothing had ever bored Archie, with his fondness for people and his eager interest in all that was going on in the world.

Helena brightened up. She had felt rather curiously outside of this fervent regard between mother and son. In her life there had been no such thing. She had received Mrs. Stanwood dutifully, but taken her measure in a superficial fashion, and decided that she would not be of much assistance in the great struggle of getting on in the world. And if his father did not mean to help! In her school a person's value was gauged by what he or she could do for you. But to really get in with the Beaumanoirs! And after all, something might happen. In their shifty lives something always had. She felt mortified over the private marriage, but her father's death excused that. And of course everybody was out of the city, so she had not expected any attention.

Mrs. Stanwood was not quite sure whether she liked this ready acceptance or not. But Archie was so eager to see the familiar faces, and to feel that he had not quite ostracized himself by his ill-considered step. He

was happy again in seeing Helena so cheerful ; perhaps, too, his mother's love was a great factor in it.

They would keep the worst of the story from everyone, they decided at Sherburne House. After all, it would be only for a week, then Archie must start for his future home.

"Still, I am a little surprised. You imagine a woman being crushed by such a series of misfortunes," said Leonard. "I should want to go as far away as I could, at once, and stay until the matter had been forgotten. Dell, do not allow this young woman to draw too largely upon your sympathies."

"Do I need the advice more than Tessy?"

"Tessy is sheltered under my wing," with a laugh. "And I am answerable to Bertram in some degree."

"I think you need not feel afraid. I never cordially liked the girls, though I could give no special reason. I hate the excuse—'not in our set,' for I have found some delightful people outside of 'our set,'" glancing up with fascinating archness.

Leonard colored. He was coming to have less respect for certain arbitrary decrees, based largely on money.

He went alone to the station to receive his guests. He was not proof against Archie's entreating eyes, that confessed far more than the younger cousin was aware of. Young Mrs. Stanwood had resolved to make the most of the relationship, to take it up with familiarity, and ignore the misfortunes as far as possible. Her father had been so little to her that she could almost persuade herself that the series of crimes had been committed by a stranger. It really could not be laid at her door.

Was this courteous, dignified man who held her at a distance the same Leonard Beaumanoir that girls were

pulling caps for two winters ago? She had not disdained to enter the lists. She had danced with him, she had been proud of his attentions, and maneuvered for them in the struggle going on continually in society, where the matrimonial prizes are often captured at some unexpected turn. Her eyes drooped a little and a flush of mortified consciousness stained her cheek. The small veiled rebuffs were not new to her. And in the long drive, while he and Archie had the talk to themselves, she swallowed her chagrin and resolved on an appealing, wistful course that might arouse sympathy.

Lyndell was rather touched by it. Helena was shrewd enough not to allow Miss Sherburne or Mrs. Beaumanoir to ignore the winter's quasi-intimacy. There were so many mutual friends, safe subjects for conversation, and she was very enthusiastic about Sherburne. Archie was glad to see them so cordial, glad to have Helena acquit herself so creditably. It had come to that already. He had found Helena could be disagreeable and indifferent, to a verge of ill-breeding; her occasional hardness grated on his soul, for he had never connected it with women of education and refinement.

Archie went down to see his father on the second day, alone; his mother advised it. She was heart-broken to think this should come between father and son, who had been such companions.

Dell really took upon herself the entertainment of Mrs. Archie. She drove her to the most interesting points, but the expressions of admiration had no discrimination. Ardmore Helena thought a stupid, funny, little place.

"I suppose the Beaumanoirs will not stay here altogether," she ventured, as they were turning homeward,

after calling on Mrs. Kirby, who had grown quite infirm, and Miss Carew. "And really, it does not look such a great sacrifice to me as Archie insists. Could you be content to spend your life here?" It would just kill me. Suppose Dr. Carew had been willing to come down here?"

"We should have been very happy," declared Dell, with a bright blush. It had seemed at times as if she might have persuaded him for his father's sake, but the elder doctor would not listen to it.

"I can't imagine it." And you have money besides. Archie says a handsome income. Well, you will need it all in New York. It costs a good deal to be somebody there. And *your* doctor will be a great favorite. I think I should be jealous. But oh, what a lucky girl you are!"

"I hope to be a happy one," Lyndell said gravely.

"Well, I should be happy as a queen. I think I didn't understand what it was to marry a poor man until it was too late. Archie is tender and lovely, and I had only seen him in society, and had good times with him, and wasn't thinking about money. We had always had enough."

Helena paused, with an embarrassed rise of color.

"Of course you all know the dreadful story," she began, facing it with a kind of heroic audacity. "But I can't see that we should be blamed for it. Mamma never knew anything was wrong, and how could we? And I think it was really brave in papa not to live and disgrace us. When I married Archie we only knew that papa had been unfortunate. And the house had to be broken up——"

Helena wiped her eyes. "It was very sad," ventured Lyndell.

"If I had known it then, I'm not sure but I should have gone out of the world, too. Archie was so good and comforting. I dare say you all think I oughtn't have married him; but when one is half crazed, and a door of refuge is opened to you—— Addie was to be married. She was likely to get out of it all, and have plenty of money."

Could anyone call a marriage like that fortunate? Dell shuddered, and could make no reply.

"You girls with plenty of money and relatives to take you in, know nothing of the hard side of life. To be sure, I didn't myself;" with an airy toss of the head. "But when a blow comes upon you suddenly, and you don't know which way to turn——"

"I hope you will love him and make him happy. I think he was very brave and chivalrous," interposed Dell, in the pause. "He has such a trusting, affectionate nature. He has always adored his mother, and she didn't—— No one dreamed of his marrying so—so suddenly."

Dell's voice was unsteady with emotion that partook largely of regret. She was too true to assert that the marriage had been the best way out of the dreadful trial and the poverty to come. It did not seem best for Helena, in whom an undercurrent of dissatisfaction was seething. It would never bring out what was noblest in Archie, and no real happiness could be predicated of it. All the marriages Dell had known intimately, save Ethel's, had had a great share of love in them. Even a few that would have had a hard struggle with poverty had that blessedness. So she could not give the warm approval she was longing to out of her abundant sympathy.

"And when I married him we thought he would stay in or around New York. I hate to go up in northern Michigan, or anywhere on the frontier. Oh, don't you suppose his father will use some influence to prevent?"

"I am afraid Archie will not make a second appeal," returned Dell slowly. She knew Aunt Julia was quite satisfied to have him go.

"I begged him, the last word I said this morning. But, do you know, Archie has an awfully obstinate streak in him? I supposed he was very easy and yielding."

"He did not go purposely for that?" asked Dell, with a pang of apprehension. Uncle Stanwood's indignation would be roused indeed.

"Why, I insisted it was his duty. Indeed it *is*. The idea of our going off there, when there are places nearer home where one can have some entertainment, where there are people and receptions and theaters—I'm so fond of the theater. Well, then, I shall worry at him until he gives up his profession. Lieutenant Stanwood has a style, but I'd rather have plain Mr. and some consolations."

"You don't know; some people find frontier life very interesting."

"I shall hate it. I shall be just miserable, and make——" She paused, and had the grace to blush. "I am afraid I shall not know how to make him happy under the circumstances." It was a covert threat.

"But you must try. It is your duty," returned the young girl, with gentle decision; though she had to make a great effort to keep it gentle.

"Oh, I think all this duty talk a humbug! You do most things in this world because you like them, or to gain some end. I haven't found religious people so very

ready to relinquish the things they want. Why, they pray for them and work for them with all their might and main. It's only a case of liking different things."

"Yes, you do come to desire different things," said Lyndell reverently. "And—the happiness of others."

"See here, Miss Sherburne, suppose some very attractive woman, one of the fascinating kind, I mean, should try her utmost to get Dr. Carew. Would you think you must stand aside and not lift a finger and not pray, nor make any effort, but just let her have her way? Such things have been done. But I think you are woman enough not to give up without a struggle. You see you have had so much to your life. You have not needed to pray for any special object. But praying is desiring mightily the thing you want. You don't need to put it into words. If God knows everything, he knows what is in your heart. It would be silly to pray for the things you didn't want, when he could see it all the time. I'd have to be more honest;" with a toss of the head.

Several talks with Gifford came back to her. He said so much the same thing. Did being unhappy tend to make people faithless? She had not always been happy. Well, neither had she always had faith. Helena Stanwood and she looked at life from different points of view. She had so much. Everything she had desired had come to her, and many other God-sent blessings that her wildest fancy could not have imagined. Did this girl envy her?

Ah! she knew she did. Money was of so small account that she would gladly divide hers here and now with Archie. How odd that she should care so little about it! But perhaps she would "go envying," if she had nothing, and misfortune and contumely had over-

taken her. It softened her heart toward her cousin's wife. Yet she had not experience enough to set Helena straight, though she longed to make the higher motive dear to her.

"I like a city. I couldn't exist down here. The only country I like is a summer resort, mountains, if there are hotels and people; seaside, in the same way. I never could go mooning about woods and wilds. When people are grown they are not easily made over. I don't know as I want to be made over;" with a short, unpleasant laugh. "With a fortune I'd rather be myself than anyone I know, unless it was someone very handsome. Don't you think beauty a great card, honest now? Not mere prettiness, but the kind that takes one captive at once. Yet, after all, there are some women who have it, and who absolutely don't know how to use it. I'd have the world at my feet."

She was so volatile. For the next ten minutes she seemed to forget her grievances, and recalled several women she had known and envied. They drove up the avenue. Millicent and her little girl and Mrs. Beaumanoir had come over. Tessy sat in her pretty willow rocker, the picture of serene content. Leonard had been reading aloud from a magazine.

"She is pretty and winsome, but she'll never hold him in the years to come," Helena thought, irritated by the tender domestic influence that pervaded the scene. Of course her father was rich, and one of the men about whom there had never been a breath of scandal. What if *she* had captivated him two or three years ago? But he wouldn't have had the prestige of Sherburne House. And the family was rather strait-laced, all but Fanny. She never could have felt at home with them.

She did not feel at home now. There was a refinement in the atmosphere that oppressed her. She did not make any headway, and she missed Archie's devotion. The visit would be productive of nothing, unless Archie should bring her a thought of hope. Really, the evening was stupid ; their brightness did not run in her channel.

Archie returned the next day, and the first glance at his rather grave but satisfied face, raised her hopes.

"Oh," she cried, "your father——"

"My dear Helena, I told you not to build any hopes," he said, with a tenderness that would have comforted a woman who loved him.

"You didn't try ! I know you didn't. And—I wish I was dead ! I never will go to that dreary place. I must have lost my senses when I married you !" and she broke into a flood of angry tears.

Perhaps they had both lost their senses ! But he had his father's love back again, and he had accepted the hard fact that he had blundered at the very outset of life and must carry his burthen manfully. He was reconciled to this far-away station. When they had only each other and a life largely by themselves, they might come to a better understanding. He was ready to make the best of the sad business.

"You will write to me, Milly—and you, Dell," he said, with his good-by. "The letters will be so much to me."

Helena set her rather thin lips hard. He should not find letters such an unalloyed pleasure. He should not know any real satisfaction until they came back to New York.

CHAPTER XII.

LYNDELL.

THEY were keeping a vigil, Miss Neale and Dell Sherburne, in the old home room where they had exchanged many a confidence. They did not speak of the subject nearest their hearts ; they would not seem impatient, though the hours were leaden-winged. There was a cheerful blaze on the hearth ; for the early October evening was cool. Everything was so like old times that Dell almost imagined herself a little girl again, sitting at Miss Neale's knee. She was sitting there on the very lowest stool she could find, yet the head with its waving luxuriance of hair reached Miss Neale's shoulder, and the firelight made waves of color over the soft cheek, and shadows in the tender curves of the lips.

They had talked over the old times, her first six months at Sherburne, and its crowning joy, the day the pony came, and the evening when she had felt at peace with all the world, when she had laid down her burthen and taken the garment of earnest endeavor, of love and humility, to wrap around herself that she might know whose child she was, and keep the right way with gladness of heart.

"The doctor was out then,"—Dell's voice was a little tremulous. "And we sat up quite late—do you remember ?—and you suddenly started up and took me to bed. I wasn't a bit sleepy, and I lay there thinking, resolving—you can't guess—I almost took a vow."

She gave a soft low ripple of amusement.

"And you kept it—the unspoken vow?"

"Oh, dear Miss Neale, I'm glad it wasn't quite spoken! I was going to live at Sherburne House, and stay single to show Aunt Aurelia that I really honored her. But I wanted to be like you," pressing the thin hand against her blooming cheek, and then making a cup with it around her chin. "I never can be as lovely, but I shall have you for my very own. It's a fair exchange. Aunt Aurelia has Tessy——"

She paused in a great awe. What if no one had Tessy now! She clung to Miss Neale. The issues of life and death were in God's hands.

The tall old clock began its hourly count. Nine, ten, eleven. There was a sound of horses' feet. Dell sprang up and flew to the door. It was cloudy, with here and there a faint rift, but oh, how sweet this night world was! She ran down the path and stretched out her arms. Whatever the word, she would be at home in these fatherly arms that would strengthen her for any sorrow.

"It is all right." But the doctor's voice was unsteady with emotion. "There's a new Edward Sherburne at Sherburne House. And by the time he outgrows his mother's care, I hope his father will have sense enough to know what to do with him."

"He will never outgrow his mother's care. Oh, thank Heaven!"

They both stood still, for minutes it seemed. He was wondering if some day he should thrill to an announcement of his son's child.

"There, run and tell Heart's Delight. She's as wild as you to hear. A fine boy, and everything to give thanks for. Mind you set a wedding day to-morrow."

Miss Neale went out to the kitchen and made a cup of coffee, spread some thin bread and butter and sliced a cold chicken. Dell rolled the small table to the fireside, and placed the doctor's armchair and slippers. She was the daughter of the house, rich in a father's love.

"Yes, it's all right," nodding as he came in. "One grandmother is there, the other is sleeping in her bed like a Christian woman, I hope. Babies are no great rarity to her."

"But you'll see! This will be the most wonderful of all!" and Dell gave a tremulous laugh to cover emotion. How foolish that one should want to cry for joy!

"There, go to bed, both of you. I have seen enough crazy women for one day. I want to quiet my nerves by a good smoke, and be alone, and think. To-morrow will be a new day."

Dell kissed him and obeyed. She would go up to Sherburne House and ask her own questions. Tessy's baby! Tessy's little boy! And it was a long while before she could remember that Leonard had any individual joy.

They had been waiting to set a wedding day, until they knew whether it would be in the midst of joy or sorrow. Aunt Aurelia had been making Dell ready with a fervent affection that touched the young girl. She declared there was enough furnishing for a lifetime.

It was Bertram who set the wedding day. They would be married in the old church that had seen so many Sherburne brides. But Dell should choose the wedding journey, only it could not be a very long one. In ten days he must be back at some important lectures. His being chosen to deliver them was so great an honor he could not well decline—he should hate to, he frankly admitted.

"Then my journey shall not be announced until the eventful morning," declared Dell, with a merry light in her eyes, "and it will be a great surprise."

The baby at Sherburne House could not absorb quite all the interest. He was all Beaumanoir. The fuzz on his head was thick and dusky, and his eyes, when he deigned to open them, were large and black. Nothing untoward happened, for Dr. Carew was the veriest tyrant. Tessy was shut up out of harm's way, and the way of congratulations, only a chosen few being allowed to go in and look at her. So everybody had time to consider the approaching marriage.

Dell insisted through these days she had three homes, and it took all her time to go from one to another. In this quiet, social old neighborhood there was no need of secluding herself. Friends and neighbors came in with best wishes, and they did not seem premature or officious. Millicent was her elder sister, ready for all whims and desires, full of a tenderness so intense that Dell wondered at times, in a breathless manner and with a pang she could not comprehend, if she had taken any grace out of this lovely, generous life.

The baby was christened on Sunday. Tessy came down to the great drawing room—was carried, rather—in her husband's arms. She looked like a little child in her soft white gown, her eyes deep and glorified with the new life that had begun for her,—for all three,—the family life, that comprehended the great mystery of love.

Edward Lyndell Sherburne. The eyes unclosed and wandered around in slow baby fashion. Was he to be Christ's faithful soldier and servant to his life's end?

The prettiest grandmother was Mrs. Murray, who had hardly changed since Dell's birthday party, and who was

as delighted, if not as proud, as Mrs. Beaumanoir. She had come for the wedding as well—that was to take place on Wednesday.

There was to be no bridesmaid, oddly enough. Morna Murray, who might have graced the occasion, was still abroad. Nora von Lindorm was to be the small maid of honor, and hold her cousin's glove and bouquet. Then all the relatives were to stand around, quite informally. After that a reception. Everybody was bidden. All the country round was ready and delighted to do honor to Miss Sherburne. The last wedding at the old house had been Miss Julia's, and no merrymaking could be quite like a wedding. , The servants were full of joy and merriment. Dell was touched by their devotion.

Lizzy Jackson came up with such a beautiful gift that, before she thought, Dell cried out in her emotion, "Oh, Lizzy, how could you! It is five times too much!"

"No, Miss Dell, there isn't anything that could be too much. The old doctor's always been so good to us, and Mas'r Bertram seems like as if he b'longed to Sherburne House. And then that old time! Homer'n me can never forget how brave you were about the money. And all that long sickness, when you didn't know anyone, and clung to me as I'd been your real Southern mammy. And though the new missus is like a little angel, and Mas'r Leonard worships the ground she walks on, no one will ever forget you. We're all glad to have Mas'r Leonard here, an' no stranger; still, Homer and me half wish it was goin' to be the young doctor an' you. But the old doctor say he couldn't ever agree to his only son taking another name, so it wouldn't be Sherburne, after all. The Lord brings things round all right, even if it

aint our way. And you've been good to me and mine many a time, and now we begin to feel quite like rich folks, with our bit of ground, and money in the bank. My ! it don't seem nine year ago that we were all crowdin' round to see new little missy, Mas'r Edward's daughter."

It brought the scene so vividly before Dell, the night she had come a stranger and an alien to her father's house—a forlorn, heart-broken child. The tears of sympathy rushed to her eyes for that desolate girl ; and then a quick thanksgiving for all the blessings God had showered upon her. She was not the first one who had to travel through the desert to reach the land of Canaan.

" And we all do think Miss 'Relia been converted in her old days. Cassy says she's that sweet she sometimes feels afraid she gets so near heaven the door 'll just open and she'll slip through. Queer, Miss Dell, how folks go to church, and go to church, and don't seem to see the real meanin' of things till some day the good Lord just shines on them in all his glory, and the way's made plain. Well, St. Paul, you know, thought he was doin' God service when he was persecutin', an' hatin', and breathin' fire. An' Miss Liza's such a mild, contented body, and Mas'r Len's wife was just born in grace, and don't have to get religion. But we all think, Miss Dell, if it was anyone but Mas'r Bertram, we couldn't let you go."

Lizzy looked up through tears and smiles.

" You don't know how glad I am at being so well loved," exclaimed Dell, clasping both the hands that had done so much work in their day.

" And we all prayin' God will give you back a hundred-fold, and that there be children to grow up and just

make your life as happy as happy can be, and no sorrow come to you, as came to old doctor. And we're just wild a-hopin' there won't be a cloud in the sky, nor anything to cast a shadow."

"Thank you a thousand times. And, Lizzy, pray that I may be worthy of all these blessings, that I may live up to all your hopes for me."

Not quite ten years ago. Like a vision, that summer day came back to her when they had played "circus" in Murray's Row, and she had seen Miss Sherburne for the first time. God had brought her childish threats, her hatred and obstinacy, to naught. How she had despaired because she could not see God's plan, when she had no eyes for anything besides her own! She was so happy now, that, as she had once said to Miss Neale, it seemed as if she could be good forever.

There had been many changes among the colored people in the decade. Numbers of the old slaves were dead. Others had gone elsewhere, lured by the thought of coming up in a new place where their fathers had not been slaves. But Homer and Lizzy Jackson had a strong attachment to the old place.

Dell was often moved in these few days by the fond and heartfelt wishes for "young missy." She found too, that Bertram ranked next in their estimation to Leonard. She was not jealous. Indeed, she was glad that through her husband she should strengthen her claim on them.

Lyndell Sherburne's wedding day was perfect from the hand of God. It was a tradition in the family that Sherburne brides always had the sun to smile on them—the gorgeousness of mid-October, with scarlet and browns and burnished evergreens. Vines trailed in riotous glory,

and every common little shrub put on its last attempt at bloom and bravery. The tawny husks of bittersweet showed their vermilion berries shyly hiding until frost burst wide the covers. All the rich fragrances of autumn came out of the great heart of nature to do honor—a day of tender blessing to crown the two beginning life together.

The old church had been decked with loving hands, and was in the hush of reverent expectation. All the country had come to do her honor, and she walked up a sea of smiling faces and eyes of friendliest joy, that made a radiance of sunshine within. Her uncle gave her away, and her lover took her hand in a strong, tender clasp. Did she hear the words ?—they seemed so brief—the ring was on her finger—they were kneeling down at the chancel rail, with clasped hands, then she felt herself raised with a mysterious pressure, and her husband kissed her. Afterward they turned and stood still for congratulations with the benediction of the Church still about them in its perfected blessing.

There were many beside the relatives who would have felt hurt if they could not have wished the young doctor joy in their own primitive fashion. Some of them remembered his young mother's death ; they had seen him a chubby boy, riding round with his father or walking to church with Aunt Neale, playing with their own boys, going nutting and frolicking, and then off to college, when they wondered how his father could spare him. Proud of his winning prizes ; proud of his honors in a big city ; perhaps, proudest and most touched by his love and devotion to his old father. And so they owned a share in him, even if Miss Lyndell Sherburne had taken him for the rest of his life. She couldn't blot out

any of the past, and that was so much to these people who would never even see New York in all probability.

It was like an ovation as they came down the aisle where the children had strewn flowers. Dr. Carew thought it the proudest and happiest moment of his life. He did not even envy Mr. Beaumanoir his large household.

Dell smiled on this side and that. Surely if a smile could give pleasure, and on this day of all days, when she had been given her heart's desire, why should she be chary?

She was put in the carriage presently and her lovely white gown gathered about her in soft billows. She and her husband! It was so new and strange. Last night he was her lover, just as he had been for a year and more. A flush came to her cheek, and her velvety eyes grew humid, drooped shyly. She was almost afraid of the new life that was to prove the quality of their love, to refine the youthful dross, to bring out the pure gold. She could not dream then how this first step in her wedding journey was to come back to her, but she thought curiously enough of the refiner's fire. Did not all human love need testing, proving? She would prove hers joyfully, she thought. Had she not been proved in many things?

Her husband's hand stole over to hers, then he half rose, gathered up the white billows, and came down beside her with a sudden subversion as the wheel jolted over a stone. They both laughed, and the tense newness was dispelled. They were lovers again, and this was a lover's kiss.

"It was beautiful," he began. "Nothing has come so near Milly's wedding. And yet, Dell, you can't think *who* came in my mind, whom I pitied profoundly."

She glanced up with asking eyes. Then she said:

"Archie?"

"Yes, Archie, poor fellow! I don't care for fashion and show—that is only display; but it seems to me a marriage, when there are relatives and friends, ought to be a family matter. There would be less trouble in the world if there was a family safeguard about it. I have known so much misery from the deceptions and mistakes of private marriages. And the horrible loneliness when no one comes to give you a good wish! Archie was such a whole-souled, generous, affectionate fellow. Has he quite wrecked his life, do you think?"

The quick tears came to Dell's eyes at the thought of Archie with no real affection to solace him in his new home.

"There, dear, we will not talk of lonely or unfortunate weddings. Ours has been so complete." Then he gave a soft laugh. "Have you told anyone the sequel?"

"I must ask your father," laughingly.

"*Your* father, Dell; I think he has coveted you. And there was no other way for him to get you. But then I had a longing for you myself, and, after all, I shall take you away from him. There will be the knowledge of possession, however," with an appreciative smile.

Her share in the complete joy was the consciousness that both wanted her.

They drove up the winding avenue. Did she once sit at the window up there with a swelling heart and a belief that no one wanted her?

Sherburne House overflowed. There was young Mrs. Beaumanoir in her wedding gown, there was Milly all in white, looking as the Madonna might have looked in early life, when her knowledge was but vague forebod-

ings. Nora growing tall and sweet, with much of her father's pretty eagerness; Fanny, who was a puzzle to them all, and who was quite sure to be the family old maid, Ethel thought.

Mistress Ethel was extremely elegant in her mauve velvet and point lace. Even Aunt Lepage made her appearance, and looked as if she might last many years. Florence had been refused the indulgence; she was deep in her studies, and in another year expected to bow to the great world of fashion.

"There is no one we should really care to have her meet," said Ethel, "and weddings are pretty much alike—bores, if you haven't a responsible part."

But the pleasant throng at Sherburne House did not look bored. The tall, graceful bride gave a charm to every place by her joyous smiles and arch rejoinders. Bertram and Leonard were impressive in their brotherliness, James and Lawrence Murray were quite distinguished-looking young men, and Fanny piquantly entertained both. Con, from the heart of Africa, sent a letter and a splendid diamond and said he must be excused for not parading his broken heart and monopolizing the sympathy to such an extent there would be no interest left for the bride and groom. And Dell caught one or two of the doctor's glances at Mr. Murray, which she told him afterward were full of envy.

They came and went. Carriages and old-fashioned wagons, buggies that were shabby and creaked and groaned. Dell cut wedding cake, and said good-bys, flitted hither and thither, until the shadows out on the drive made tall processions.

"Well," began Dr. Carew, as he caught her in the hall after she had said a long farewell to Mr. Whitting-

ham, who was very feeble now, but had come to do her honor, "well, when does the wedding journey begin? Bertram seems to have no mind of his own, and sends me to you. I am curious. You can't go to Europe and back in ten days. You can't even go to California. You know every paving-stone in Washington, and every model in the Patent Office. I was thinking about taking Miss Neale home. She may get gay and frisky with all this dissipation."

Dell gathered up her train on one arm and slipped the other through his, turning him so that they went out on the porch.

"I am going to let you decide." There was a merry, mirthful light in the brown eyes.

"Let me?" in amaze.

"Yes. If *you* wanted us——"

"I?" The incredulity was amusing.

"Oh, you slow-thoughted papa!" She laughed softly. "We want to come to you for a week. Could you stand us? Would Aunt Neale give us something to eat if we found love an unsatisfactory diet? Would you let Bertram have one of the horses to go meandering through by-ways, and I will have Prince. When Bertram gets rich and old we are going around the world, but now——"

"Oh, my darling!" and he took her in his arms.

"Why should we go round wasting our money on hotels and making ourselves a laughing stock? But you haven't said——"

"Do I need to say, my child? Dell, you couldn't——" His voice broke there. He cleared his throat. "God bless you!" he ended fervently.

Aunt Aurelia had known. And when most of the

guests had dispersed, save the relatives who had come from a distance, Dell surprised them by her announcement. They were not going to tire themselves all out by running hither and thither, but take their freshness and happiness up to the city to make their new home bright.

"We are so glad not to lose you at once," said Aunt Beaumanoir. "People used to do such things years ago. *He* used to take *her* to his father's to get acquainted."

"We are beginning old-fashionedly," laughed Dell.

And so, after dusk, when the golden stars were coming slowly out through the blue, and all the air was dewy sweet with autumn ripeness, Bertram Carew drove his wife over the well-worn road.

"Just here I stopped your father and told him all my trouble about Anita Garcia, who is going to be a famous singer——"

"*Your* father," interrupting her softly.

She blushed in the darkness. "The dearest father a girl could have," in a tender, appreciative tone.

"And Miss Garcia is among the successful ones?"

"Oh, yes! there is no question. She has a year's engagements. I hope she will come to America. And then, Bertram, if I couldn't have gone to papa! After all, I have had two of the loveliest living fathers! The dead one always belonged to mamma—as—we belong to each other," and there was an exquisite tremble in her voice.

The old fence was broken, it was always going to pieces somewhere. She caught the fragrance of the sweet briar. Dr. Carew came and lifted her out, and Bertram threw the reins to the boy. How homelike and natural everything looked. She kissed Miss Neale, ran

upstairs and took off her wraps, and they had supper. The wedding cake had been left behind at Sherburne House.

What a week it was! Of course it couldn't be kept a secret, and the neighbors made teas and little parties. They dined with Mrs. Kirby. Spencer Kirby was a nice, steady, manly young fellow, and now it was pretty well known that he was waiting on the youngest Miss Henry, and some time he would bring a bride to the old house. He should always admire Mrs. Carew, but he never could forget the shy little girl he had coaxed into the library, and how they had traveled about on the maps and had adventures. He couldn't envy Bertram. And no one had ever solved the mystery as to why you loved one person and did not love another.

There had to be a day at Beaumanoir. Milly was doing so well in the vocation that had seemed to seek her out, or that she owed to Bertram Carew. Had Dell dreamed of any other tenderness between them? Surely they would have made a splendid couple.

Nora thought Cousin Dell the loveliest of all the cousins, and wondered why mamma didn't put her in a story. Cecil was a splendid big boy. Nora was never tired of hearing how the children went out in a boat the summer on Long Island, and Cousin Dell brought them in to safety.

"Oh, dear!" said Dell, "there were so many children! It seems a pity we grew up. Didn't we grow out of the romance?"

"Hear the ungrateful girl!" exclaimed Bertram. "As if falling in love and marrying was not romantic?"

Dell blushed, and raised her eyes with a beguiling smile.

"I think now we find romance all along our lives," said Milly.

"Even in prosaic marriage?" interrupted Bertram mischievously. Then he remembered how tragic hers had been.

"Why shouldn't we go on living romances? Why should we get prosaic and commonplace and tired of it all, when there is something happening all the time? I am amazed at the weariness that comes over people. Or is it the restless desire for something new and different, for the best; as if every soul was worthy of the best and highest without any effort? You can't take a walk even without finding a change from yesterday. We ought to go on learning the richness of life, instead of sitting down and thinking we have had it all."

The grave had not closed over all with her. Helena had thought everything about this country place so stupid. Milly was entertaining the world with it. But that was genius And Helena had not even love. Dell pitied her profoundly.

But the days when they wandered off in the mysterious silence of the woods, listening to the plash of some rivulet, the sudden song of a bird, the chirp of a late insect hidden in some leafy covert, when they had no words in the fullness of their souls, were the hours they remembered long afterward.

It was a consecration to their lives. Yet it did not touch all. And the truth, once planted, may bear fruit much later than one expects, for some truths are slow in their perfecting.

To Aunt Neale it was one of the happiest weeks of her life, and she thought there had been many happy ones in her simple, beautiful faith. And when the two

men had hours of scientific talk that was like a bracing atmosphere to the elder, both lives touched at a magnetic point, and both were the richer.

Then the trunks at Sherburne House had the cards tacked on them, "Mrs. Bertram Carew." Did they belong to some stranger? Was she Dell Sherburne no longer? That suggested the mysterious future.

She had gone away and come back so many times. New York had not changed her—neither Europe nor California; and it seemed as if she must come back presently and be so nearly the same. She did not feel changed. The mysterious bond had not penetrated her whole soul as yet. There would be Christmas. Yes, she, *they* would come at Christmas. Life was in the plural pronoun.

"You have made us old people very, very happy," Dr. Carew said, with deep feeling.

"Oh, my child, Heaven give you the choicest joys of life!" was Aunt Aurelia's parting benison to the young wife, as she gazed into the deep brown eyes, happy eyes indeed.

Aunt Julia had been spending a fortnight at Sherburne House, and trying to reconcile herself to her son's future. Dell had been a great pleasure and comfort. They were to go separate ways, and solace each other with letters.

One of Dell's last visions was Tessy and her baby. Leonard was going up to Washington with them. Was it just ten days ago Dell Sherburne had stood up in the old flower-wreathed church and taken her new name?

CHAPTER XIII.

THREE YEARS LATER.

THEY were sitting over a late breakfast in the small, pretty room where Dell Carew often took her meals alone now. It was simply pretty, with light furnishings, and some exquisite pictures. The dining room proper was handsome enough for any state occasion. Dell had been very proud of it at first. There were remembrances of Sherburne House scattered about; there were china and silver, ancient and modern, a spacious table and luxuriant chairs, jardinieres of flowers, and shadowy palms in the corners.

In the second year of her married life Dr. Carew had met with a house just to his liking, so near the Park you could get whiffs of fragrant air, blossoms of June, and ripeness of September. The lot had been wider than usual, which gave it a fine hall, a large drawing room, dining room, and the pretty nook that might have been library, but Dell had considered it much more cosy and charming for the two of them. The front basement was fitted up for an office. Dr. Carew had said at first he would have no house patients; coming up here, no one would find him. But Dell realized how much it kept him away, and insisted.

"Can you afford to undertake such a house?" she ventured rather timidly. She had found this husband of hers very exigent in money matters. "Oh, Bertram,

let me write to Uncle Beaumanoir!" glancing up with eager, beseeching eyes.

"Not for the house, my darling. I prefer that you should live in your husband's house," with a delicate emphasis. "I don't know that I should undertake it just yet, but this opportunity is one of a thousand, and I cannot let it pass. It is not so far from the old place endeared to you. If James Murray ventures to take one of the houses, I think I ought. Five years from this time they may have gone beyond my means more than it seems to-day."

"But to begin weighed down by debt! And, after all, Bertram, I do not care so much for grandeur."

"My dear, it won't be very grand. *I* like the location, and I resolved, when I begged you to give up Sherburne House——"

"Oh, you didn't *beg!*" laughing with a kind of tender delight. "You made the merest suggestion. There was no way of ever compensating the Murrays,—I saw that,—so Leonard and Tessy had to answer for the virtues of their father. For, if sins are punished, why shouldn't virtues be rewarded?"

She glanced up triumphantly, as if she had made a new point in ethics.

"I am afraid we don't think of the virtues to reward them. But we do often take the punishment of the sins in our own hands. There, that will do for the club," with a gesture of amusement. "Dell, you make me stray in by-paths. I didn't think I was marrying an intellectual girl. And I meant to say, the hope of my life from that hour—it was the night of our engagement—has been to have a home worthy of you."

Her eyes were lustrous with emotion.

"But I said I was not sighing for grandeur."

"You shall be as grand or as simple as you please. I will provide the shell, the hut, the outside, in which to shelter you and your belongings. You may do the rest, and I will be the meekest husband you ever saw. Will that palliate my offense? Ten years from this I shall call upon you to admire *my* far-sightedness. And this is the crowning, the unassailable argument—Mr. Murray himself advises it."

"You can trust him to work out of debt," her foster-father said to Dell. "He has a splendid practice in surgery alone. And debt isn't always a bad thing for a young man with ambition."

Millicent had spent a month with Dell choosing the furniture and adornments.

"Don't crowd," advised Milly. "You will see places and articles later on that you will enjoy settling. A house—a home, rather, should be the outgrowth of one's daily life. How many people and rooms seem to be mismatched! The true test is the individual harmony."

"You said something like that to me about the first real room I had at Sherburne House."

"A young girl's room—yes;" and Milly smiled. "Then it was the room of a more mature girl, whose tastes and ideas had developed. Now it is a young wife's house, with the ideas of to-day; and then will come the changes of thirty, of middle life, of husband and wife growing old together, if you are spared to each other."

"And children!" cried Dell. "Don't forget them."

"I find Nora modifies many of my opinions," smilingly. "So leave something for the growing-up years."

And in a few months her small breakfast room had

developed, as well as the office at home. That was an hour in the morning, and another in the evening. There was another office over on the East Side where several physicians took turns in connection with a mission that was endeavoring to elevate rather than pauperize the poor.

Two years Dell had been in her own home. Three years and a little more since she had first heard herself called Mrs. Carew, with the touch and accent of joy people give to it on wedding days. Three happy years.

Fanny Beaumanoir was her guest just now. They were dawdling. Bertram had sent up word to begin without him. He was listening to a sorrowful tale, medicining soul as well as body.

Lyndell Sherburne had been one of the girls whose youth was not crowned with beauty. She had grown out of an ordinary girlhood that the elder Dr. Carew had shaped to an earnest, ambitious purpose when he turned her soul into the right path. All these lovely years it had informed her face with an inner growth of truth and strength, of grace and gentleness, and now it was fine and full of higher power than mere brilliance of complexion or regularity of feature. And her eyes had always been beautiful.

"I suppose," said Fanny Beaumanoir, "the family fate is on me and I cannot escape it. Give me a cup of hot coffee, please—I am no longer afraid of my complexion. No doubt I've had my last chance. Ethel said it was. And Aunt Lepage!" shaking her head mysteriously.

"What chance, and what family fate!" exclaimed a masculine voice. "Fanny, I had to run away from you last night. But I am glad to see you fresh and blooming. You grow prettier and younger."

Fanny sprang up and made a dainty mock courtesy.

"Thank you a thousand times," she exclaimed with a pretense of great fervor. "I was thinking myself suspiciously near that bourne or boundary line from which no woman may return. There remains a sisterhood open to me—one dreary chance. I hate the doleful gowns and bonnets, but it may answer."

"What is this all about?"

"The record of a disappointed life. Not the 'dear gazelle' business, either. I was too much of a torment and a fury ever to nurse anything. I wanted to be tall and elegant, and I am the only short cousin in the crowd. And I supposed—I firmly believed that I should be as handsome as Milly or Violet. There was a time when I considered Dell a fright, and now—look on this picture and then on that."

"Is that the family fate?"

"Really," laughed Dell, "the family fate seems marriage."

"And the exceptions? There were the Carricks, and Aunt Aurelia. And there are some Baltimore cousins."

Fanny looked up with a curious contradictory expression, as if undecided which point to establish.

"Oh, you mean marriage! We are changing all that. At least the new woman is. When they hit upon an appropriate name—I detest 'girl bachelors,'" declared the doctor.

"And spinsters have gone out of date. We do not spin any more. And—old maids."

Fanny flung this out disdainfully.

"Well, you must get old first. And I stand by my statement made a few moments ago. You are younger and prettier than when Dell was married. And who is

it that consolingly said—a woman is no older than she looks?"

"Dr. Carew, you will complete my perversion—we can't call it *con*version. You strengthen me in the error of my ways. Moreover, you are flattering this morning."

"What is it all about?" Bertram glanced at Dell with a sense of amusement.

"It is about Ethel," returned Fanny. "Ethel is the fairy godmother of the family. She raises her wand and presto! a prince or a coach and four appears. And a short time ago she raised it over my head. There was the prince—hideous but rich, and vulgar—the governor of a Western State and talked of for Congress. And I almost gave in to her fascinating wiles. I am twenty—imaginary, you know," with a piquant grimace. "I almost believed it was my last chance."

She glanced up with innocent, apprehensive eyes.

"Oh, Fanny, you didn't——"

"No—yes. I did almost. I went down to Sherburne. The Spanish Princess had an earache, I think; something was the matter—Mrs. Gradgrind's pain, perhaps. And I was foolish enough to tell Tessy. What is there about the small midget, or her eyes, or her persuasive voice that so moves you, persuades you? and I wrote a letter of thanks, declining. Well, you should have seen Ethel's letter to me. And now she has washed her hands of me. I've come up to get Dell to undertake me."

Dr. Carew laughed heartily. Fanny was so different from any other member of the family. Capricious, volatile, fond of society, and quite as fond of satirizing it; agreeable when the mood took her, and veering about with the next current. At twenty she had considered not being married one of the greatest misfortunes that

could happen to a woman; at almost five-and-twenty she was quite indifferent about it. From fancying she could love almost anyone endowed with a good share of this world's wealth, she had gone to the other extreme. Poverty she still despised, she declared, but now she wanted many other qualities. She was developing slowly. If she had married at twenty she would have made a vain, superficial, captious woman.

"Take her to the club to-night. It's some kind of reception, isn't it? I was asked for a paper. 'Art as Applied to the Lower Orders.' Well, that may not be quite it," laughingly.

"Oh, will you go? You never mentioned it!" Dell's eyes were shining. Of late his evenings had been so closely occupied.

"My dear, no. A little of myself as applied to the lower orders will be better than tons of art. Of course I couldn't bother about a thing like that. But you take Fanny. I'll come in for you. I shall be engaged until nine."

"Oh! Is that the club Millicent raves about?"

"Yes; we heard several noted people in the early autumn, when she was up. But, Bertram——"

He took out his watch. "Come down to the St. Denis and lunch with me at two. At three I have to go out of the city. To-morrow I will promise you three good meals at home."

"That comes from having a famous husband," cried Fanny, with a spice of mischief.

"Get a list of all your qualities, all your graces and physical perfections, and I'll try to pick out a man to fit," Bertram said, laughing back to Fanny. "I should like to see this paragon myself."

Dell went through the hall with her husband. Already there had come long lonesome days in her life, times of vague longing, when her high efforts had ended only in dissatisfaction. She was glad to turn back to Fanny. It was not hospital day, nor the committee day for the Home; nothing indeed but the ordinary round of life. The old Sherburne matters looked beguiling.

She seemed almost as she had been at her wedding day. A little older, a little wiser perhaps; much wiser in the knowledge of the day that had at first so fascinated her. She had entered the new sphere with such a zest; she fancied she had found her desired place in the world. It did not need the genius of the artist, poet, or musician to do good work here. The sense of power gave her a joyous thrill. It was the culmination of her haunting dream through intervals of her girlhood.

The years had not stood quite eventless with the others. Ethel had gone on successfully in her way. She had brought out her beautiful sister Florence and married her in her first season to a member of the Russian legation, who had youth, wealth, and a title. She had influenced Ned Beaumanoir to marry a girl both rich and amiable, and on the death of the elder member of the legal firm, Leonard had taken an important position in it, making an advantageous one for his younger brother. Cecil was in college.

A little daughter had come to Sherburne House, with so many names Fanny had re-christened her the Spanish Princess; indeed, her proud father called her Princess altogether, and whether she would be known as Aurelia or Millicent in later life was still an open question. Sherburne people had a fashion of perpetuating family names in alternate generations.

Alice Osborne had a third baby for a Christmas gift. They were still enjoying ranch life, interspersed with delightful episodes of travel. They had been East and to England. Colonel Ashton was growing quite infirm, and Osborne was indeed a son to him.

Mrs. Lepage no longer hesitated to quote "my daughter Mrs. Osborne." Ethel admitted the marriage had turned out very well. Mr. Longworth even went so far as to take a moneyed interest in his brother-in-law's schemes.

The new town at San Borendo, Grandon Park, as it had been named from two of its projectors, was flourishing finely. One would hardly suppose so much could have been done in that short space. Reese Drayton had made two visits at the Osbornes, then joined a party going up to Alaska and intending to explore British America.

"There's not much left for him but the North Pole," said Bevis Osborne.

The six months before her marriage and for some time after, Dell had been more nervous and anxious about Gifford than she had dared confess to anyone. He had accepted his new life, a three years' position; not what he wanted, what he had hoped for—a chance that would enable him to reach the height he believed possible. For three years Dell might think of him as a mere money-making machine. They all considered it best, and she would, no doubt, as if he had forfeited all higher ambitions and honors through the mistakes and follies of that wretched year. He would accept his exile and keep but the one ambition until it was ended. If it changed all his aims, if it rendered him sordid and indifferent at last to the finer hopes and purposes of existence, he would be what circumstances had made of him.

Dell was vexed. This obstinacy was so like Ethel's in her ill-starred episode with the count. There was a curious carping at any overruling Providence. Had he lost all faith? Mr. Osborne certainly was not an irreligious man, and he had an unquestioning reverence for matters pertaining to Christian faith. How had Gifford fallen into these lax views?

But as the time went on, he had grown interested in his new pursuits. Osborne admitted during his visit that there was a certain curious hardness and reticence in Gifford, and too great a love for money, for a healthy-toned young man. "However, he's steady as a clock; there's nothing to fear on that score. Sometimes you have to be patient and let people work out their own salvation," Osborne had said.

That would be the better way, Dell settled in her own mind. But when Gifford suggested that she was so engrossed with her own happiness that she had ceased to care, it hurt her.

Harry had been home from his three years' cruise, bright, energetic, and ambitious, and so brilliant he might have been taken for Leonard's own brother. Before they hardly knew him well, he was off again, this time to the eastern coast of Africa, less entertaining than Japan and China, but very wonderful.

Of them all, Dell's sympathy went most out to Archie. His post was not altogether an agreeable one, though he admitted that he might have been spoiled a little by civilization. There was a manful ring in his letters, as if he had accepted the result of his haste and thoughtlessness, and would bear his burthen bravely at any cost. In the second year, a little girl had been born to them, but he had not seemed joyful over it. A little girl! And in

their pretty home there was no sound of a baby voice! Dell puzzled over the swarms of children in the tenement district. How the doctors and nurses fought for their lives through the hot summer! How many of them would grow up thieves and murderers?

"A little girl!" Aunt Julia said. "If they could only send it to me. And it is put out to nurse."

Tessy's eyes had grown large and pitying over the announcement.

But Fanny was a sort of puzzle, a hopeless one, she declared laughingly.

"It is because there is so little to me," she said. "You insist upon my filling your large measures. If I groaned and prayed and tried, still I should not be able to do it—and think of all the nervous strain! I am alike inside and out—just medium, and I have accepted the fact. That is what makes me seem so commonplace."

Why she was not married puzzled herself as well as the others. Down in her heart she had a horror of being an "old maid." But people married at thirty—forty even. She was fond of society; she enjoyed the masculine part of it extremely. But after a little she tired of her lovers and said sharp things they did not like. Then they went off in a huff.

She laughed at Tessy and teased her, and said to Leonard she ought to wear Quaker gray with a white kerchief and cap. Yet she had gone to Tessy with this offer of marriage. Her mother would be undecided; Milly she declared was too romantic.

She was not sure now that she had been sensible, she insisted to Dell. She never could go back to twenty. And as for being in love, she was afraid her capacity did not run that way.

Dr. Carew met them at luncheon, and told them of half a dozen places to visit where they would find entertainment. He was very chatty and delightful, but his train wouldn't wait, and this evening he would come for them a little after nine. Fanny was satisfied with the elegant stores and a drive in the Park. "For pictures and such things bore me," she confessed.

"I do wonder if you will be bored to-night. There is always some famous person to see. And generally some fine engravings or a set of antiques, which you don't care a penny about. I almost wonder Bertram proposed it."

"And no dancing! Oh, Dell, have you given up the delightful things of life?"

"Oh, no! I have a dancing class at a kindergarten," laughingly. "And occasionally I try it in the best society. Oh, we are not recluses."

"My prince would have been like an elephant on the floor. The man I marry must dance. But I shall like to see these wonderful people, so I can discourse upon them for Milly's benefit."

The carriage set them down a little late. The hall was arranged like a delightful drawing room, with chairs and sofa placed in cosy groups. Some very fine pictures had been loaned for the meeting, there were two or three new ones by young artists on their way to fame, a quantity of elegant East India drapery, a cabinet of Egyptian curios, and flowers selected and arranged with a proper appreciation of the tone and refinement of the club.

There was an unmistakable air of culture about most of the persons present. They were indeed striving for the finest metaphysical knowledge, and they believed that a sincere search after truth, a capacity for original thought,

and a generous recognition of all theories that might be presented, should be among their social usages. While the membership was very select and kept from intrusion of undesirable people, speakers of every shade of belief, of scientific truth, of research and discovery, were made welcome and listened to with an attention that was flattering.

This evening Professor Fayreweather had one of the notable papers, in which he elaborated the ethical side of beauty. The degeneracy in art he insisted had proven the degeneracy of mankind. The expression of a noble thought must be on noble lines from the cottage to the palace, must indeed begin at the cottage, the very foundations. The poor sewing girl's room, the child's nursery, the kitchen must be conformed to the lines of chaste simplicity and harmony such as we find in nature, such as inspired the old Greek world in its noblest days, when a child's artistic pose was unstudied grace, and the poorest mother understood the lines of harmonious development. To be enfranchised from low ideals, to so regulate the commonest toil that it should personify the truth itself, to give honest expression to the illumination which was the source and center of all loveliness, to the well and purely trained æsthetic soul, would raise the masses from the degradation and ugliness that surrounded them to-day, would fill them with worthy aspirations, and they would no longer be content to grovel. In their redemption our own souls would expand.

There was a pause and the merest murmur of applause. Lyndell and her cousin had not gone any distance toward the central table and the piano; indeed, Dell felt a little shy, since this was the first time she had really taken the initiative. Two or three men drifted past her with a soft step, one of them turned, studied her a

moment and looked away indifferently, turned again as if by some spell and bowed gravely. Oh, who was it, with this perplexing resemblance? She had met so many different persons the last year or two!

The paper ended presently, not before Fanny had made a ridiculous *moue*, which Dell knew was not a yawn. And then the figure advanced, there was a half smile. Had she forgotten him?

"In some unknown world—centuries ago—three years and more——" and the man smiled familiarly.

"Oh, Mr. Drayton!"

Dell's face was transfigured, though she had been trying earnestly for interest in the subject.

"I was sure it must be you. Though you are no longer Miss Sherburne."

"Mrs. Carew."

"Yes. I heard Dr. Carew was to read a paper to-night. And I confess I was curious to know what manner of man——"

"That is not Dr. Carew." Her face was scarlet.

"Oh, yes! I had the mistake corrected. I am tremendously glad," in a low, soft, satisfied tone. "But he *is* here?" lifting his brows a trifle.

"No; he will be here in ten minutes or so. Allow me to introduce you to my cousin, Miss Beaumanoir."

He turned a chair around to face them. Little groups began to converse in low trained tones. The whole aspect was one of extreme refinement, culture. A lady went to the piano.

"Now we are at liberty to talk. Are you surprised?"

"Yes. I can't imagine where you have come from."

"From Quebec, from Portland, from Boston. Or do you insist upon my going further back?"

"Oh, no!" laughingly.

"I suppose you understand why we must put beauty in the commonest kitchen. I've had some kitchens up north, but I think there was more beauty in the world outside. Your chimney is so given to smoking, and it is hard to preserve a serene equilibrium. Did he ever try it, I wonder?" nodding toward the end of the room. "May I ask how long you have been in the city?"

"Since my marriage. Though I fancy I may be classed as an old inhabitant, as I lived here in my childhood."

There was a little hush through the room as the music ceased. A tall foreign figure in a foreign garb rose, and was introduced to the audience. Drayton raised his brows in faint surprise.

There was a learned account of Buddhism in a very gentle voice, a simpler account of absorption drawn from the natural world and applied to the sublime repose, from the raindrops that descended to the earth, to the grass and flowers, the grain and harvest, the reaper who fed his body upon it, until the body had lived its life out, and the inner light that we called soul went through successive cycles in an orderly manner. There was no need of questioning the mysterious methods arranged with such wonderful wisdom. Why fret with a hundred subtle doubts and misgivings when here was peace?

"I've just found out—I never realized it before. I am a full-fledged Buddhist;" and Drayton glanced from Dell to her cousin.

"Oh, *do* you understand it?" whispered Fanny, in a mocking, incredulous manner. "It's so nice and comfortable. There would be no need of worrying about

anything. It is the placid, undisturbed people who keep their youth and beauty. And couldn't one grow beautiful under that *régime?*"

The face was certainly piquant, the eyes were illusive in color, dark and light, and the mouth provoking. She was not to be compared to Mrs. Carew, yet she attracted him. In his two years ago visit he had learned to know them all in family order.

"I don't understand—I've simply been living it. I'm a lazy fellow, and love ease and culture and the soft side of life. Then as a discipline—I had some Puritan ancestors—I go off to the hard side of things to preserve an equilibrium. I needn't do it at all. I am glad I have found out. I can just let myself,—what is it?—be absorbed by the next influence——"

"Are you on the soft side or the hard side now?"

Fanny glanced him over in an impersonal manner.

"Oh, Miss Beaumanoir! Do you not call this the crown and flower of superior civilization? And I have just come from Boston, from the very elect! They had some Orientalism there, I remember. Are there cycles in the world's knowledge? Does everything come about again after so long a time? What is it, Mrs. Carew?"

Dell had been curiously moved by both papers. First in unbelieving indignant protest; and then the smooth, soft, trained voice, that somehow took her over to the Bay of Monterey that beautiful day. She was tired and that was restful. Where had she read the sentence "floating out on a soundless ocean"? The Hindu's voice and words recalled it. Was it true? Was the ocean ever soundless, the moving, hurrying mass that swept from continent to continent?

She had a presentiment and, turning suddenly, smiled. Drayton followed her eyes. A tall man was coming over to them—with nothing specially indicative about him except a good, strong frame, a rather ordinary countenance, with a close-cropped light beard and tumbled brown hair. Was that Dr. Carew ?

CHAPTER XIV.

THE OUTCOME OF METAPHYSICS.

THE place was in a sudden soft stir, as if a wave of music had swept over it. Dell liked the wonderful harmony of movement, the new combinations that were like pictures. She thought this one of the fascinating interludes of the club. She was rising too; she held out one hand to her husband, and then she espied a friend of his, a Mr. Curtis, following, who smiled in a familiar way that confused her, but the next moment she knew the smile was not for her.

"Upon my word, Drayton! And you declared you didn't know a soul in the city!"

Dell had introduced her husband, and then Mr. Curtis to Fanny; and he resumed his whimsical protest.

"I mentioned Dr. Carew—I thought you had the paper. I was coming to hear *you*, and your plan for taking artfulness out of the lower orders, and substituing art. Drayton, you have gotten in under false pretenses. The Philalethes are very particular. Confess your enormities."

"I met Miss Sherburne on the other side of the continent, and then she lived in Virginia. How could I tell that I should see her here to-night, or that she was your Dr. Carew's wife? I might quarrel with you, because you gave me an idea of the doctor different from the reality," in an amusingly aggrieved tone.

"After all this sweetness and light!" subjoined Fanny sententiously.

"It is very fine, I suppose. But what are they going to do with themselves when development has reached its highest round? Become materialists, agnostics, Buddhists—or what?"

"My dear fellow," said Curtis, "development never reaches its highest round. There are always barbarians, like yourself, so we never even get down to the lower orders, except Dr. Carew here."

They paired off a little, and yet kept in a group. Drayton came around to the right of the doctor. Fanny was chaffing with Mr. Curtis.

So this was Miss Sherburne's hero that she had always loved. He would be finer-looking at forty, than now at thirty. There was a simplicity and directness in the face, a purpose—purposes rather of his own. Just now there was a curious far light in his eyes, as if half the brain was busy about something else.

"Do you honestly enjoy these things?" Drayton asked, following out a rather puzzled thought.

"Enjoy?" The doctor's brow creased between the eyes, and he considered a moment. "Yes. I don't mean that I indorse everything. We are told to prove all things and hold fast to that which is good, but the wisdom of the world goes on trying to prove, and doesn't care to hold fast of much. You meet many interesting people; indeed, we have poets, and artists, and thinkers of every degree and kind, and, now and then, some guest from abroad who has threshed over the old straw and found some new ideas, or revels in the old ones. You know my experience is mostly with people in their real every-day moods. It is often a treat to see them dressed up to the last

degree of polish. We couldn't all stand the white light of truth. Even nature gives us cloudy, uncertain days."

"But nature never deceives."

"I suppose not, if we understood her thoroughly. But what we call nature often falls far short of fulfillment. We cannot penetrate her grand secrets. Oh, here are the coins! some new discoveries among them."

Drayton was interested in the collection. Dell glanced around. At first this cultivated, harmonious throng had awed her greatly. There were nervous, attenuated women with slim hands and serious eyes, who read Greek and Sanscrit and could repeat pages of the Vedas. They were circling around the guest of the evening, the young Hindu who had come to investigate American institutions, and was planning the conversion of the western world with inscrutable gravity. Another group was gathering about the professor, and though the club frowned on pronounced æsthetic attire, there were slight touches that added a pretty picturesqueness. Here was a knot discussing Music. Then someone began a low plaintive interlude, not meant to disturb the company. There were no really young girls, and many women quite at middle life, who had pets and *protégés* among the young men.

It was in order to discuss and criticise the rare old hangings, envy them as well. There was some fine singing. Fanny and Dell were seated now; someone had taken possession of the doctor, and Mr. Drayton and Mr. Curtis, nothing loth, had descended to the amusing trivalities of society.

"If there is any club of the commonplace, I shall join that," declared Fanny. "This rarefied air would shorten my days. And I want to live them all out."

"Then you must be supremely good. The other people only live out half of them."

Fanny gave a shrug that accented her piquancy.

The company betrayed signs of dispersion. The hum of voices was a little louder. A sweet-faced woman came and talked to Dell a little about a meeting for to-morrow, several others expressed their pleasure at seeing her. One lady hoped they wouldn't always be disappointed about hearing the doctor. "She should hate to be a doctor's wife."

They had gone out of sweetness and light and come back to natural feeling.

"Mr. Drayton, as you are an old friend of Mrs. Carew's, I wonder if I might ask you to take charge of the two ladies for a few blocks while I discuss a little matter with Curtis?"

"It will give me great pleasure. I had begun to suspect Curtis of being the fifth wheel," he added jestingly.

The two fell a trifle behind, but the three had a bright, eager talk, for all they were so dissimilar.

Just as they were wishing each other good-night,—it was almost good-morning,—Drayton said suddenly:

"Oh, Mrs. Carew, when have you heard from your cousin, Mr. Lepage?"

"Not in a long time—months. And not from Mrs. Osborne recently. Three babies interfere with correspondence. Oh, has anything—any misfortune happened?"

"I heard from the Osbornes—they are all well; I wonder you have not. You were such warm friends."

"We are warm friends still." Dell's voice was cold.

Carew was inviting Drayton to call in any time; Curtis was already an occasional caller.

"It is quite an experience," began Fanny. "I can see where Milly took great pleasure in it, but do *you* really like it, Dell."

"For a variety." It would be mortifying to confess to Fanny that many things had begun to pall on her that she had entered into with high hopes and boundless interest—in which she had failed to find the real heart.

"Mr. Drayton is queer—you don't know what to make of him. Yet he is wonderfully entertaining. He and the Osbornes are great friends, it seems. How odd he should come to light just at this crisis!"

"Is it a crisis in your affairs, Fanny? Well, he isn't vulgar, nor a governor of a barbarian state, and I will see what I can do for you. Dell may be better authority about his fortune."

"Oh, we heard about the fortune long ago. I am afraid you won't believe in my high and noble purposes in life until I fall desperately in love and marry some impecunious clerk."

"You and Fanny may talk a while in girl fashion," said Bertram, with his arm around his wife. "I want to write an hour or so."

"But it's so late"—pleadingly, and Dell glanced entreatingly at him.

"I must gather roses—ideas, while I may. And I picked up a few first class ones to-night. The days are too short for me."

"If you think I am going to lose my beauty sleep—and there are only ten minutes of it left," laughed Fanny. "I am not sentimental, and Dell's married. We are not anxious to pose for 'Maud and Madge in the bitter St. Agnes weather';" and she danced away.

Bertram Carew kissed his wife tenderly. "Some day we'll go abroad and have a delightful long holiday," he said softly. "Meanwhile I *must* improve every moment."

He entered the pretty library and shut the door. There was his open desk and the papers just as he had left them this morning. Dell was perfection about those things. She was never "clearing up" over here on this side, his side.

He was so interested the hours sped on and on. The talk earlier in the evening with that queer Herman, warped in both body and brain, was fresh and crisp in his mind. It was almost as if he had looked inside of the man.

Dell lay awake until after the clock struck one. Sometimes she stayed with him, lying on the sofa. She was very proud of him and the eminence he had obtained so young, and she rejoiced in his father's pride. But to-day a feeling of loneliness would not be banished. Yet she had been glad of Fanny's bright chatter, and Bertram had said:

"It is quite a godsend to have her come to keep you company now while I am so busy."

She had cared for Fanny the least of all her cousins; Ethel she had never pretended to love since her early girlish efforts. And now it was strange, but she was glad to have the light, superficial, trifling girl, who did not want to peer into any deep things. Bertram had trusted her with his secret, that only one other friend knew, that he was taking some new lines on brain functions and their diseases, that mysterious borderland where insanity begun, and the responsibility of training in early life. He put it aside during his daily duties, as too pro-

found and absorbing to indulge in with safety to his other demands.

Just at the moment when Dell's brain was steeped in drowsiness, she remembered the days over on the Pacific Coast, and the last vision passing before her eyes was Reese Drayton.

She had a vague recollection of her husband bending over her and kissing her, but when she woke in the morning, and she slept late, there was only a dent in the pillow. She was glad he had not thrown himself on the lounge for an hour or two. He was writing when she glanced in, and she stood a moment, then he stretched out his hand, smiled, and rose. Just a brief space of tenderness, then the office hour, breakfast, and off again.

This was her morning at the Child's Hospital, and there were three parties to see about admission. It would be one at least before she returned. What would Fanny do?

"Read novels and doze. Had she any interesting novels?"

Dell laughed doubtfully. "I've gone to so much solid reading. There are papers and magazines in the case in the breakfast room. It would be folly to ask you to go with me."

"I am glad to find you so sensible."

Bertram had at first rather objected to her accepting so many duties. She had begun with such high hopes in this her new world. It almost seemed to her that she and Bertram could conquer so large a space of wretchedness, let in so much sunshine, that half the city would be irradiated. And now it was so little she was well-nigh discouraged. Alleviation, which must go on forever, since there were present pressing needs, often seemed a waste of time and force, as it

could not go to the root of things. How to strengthen the weak, vapid souls that had no thought beyond to-day, that believed, being placed here without any volition of their own, the world was in some way answerable for them, and they were going to depend on it when the waves of adversity or carelessness beat upon them.

Then it annoyed her to see charity subordinated to a business, and bound about with iron rules that reduced everyone to the same level. No wonder refined and delicate women starved in their wretched homes rather than ask assistance.

"But there must be some sort of organization," explained Bertram. "Otherwise you would not be able to weed out the undeserving."

"But the undeserving, the unkind and unthankful seem to get the most. You can't keep them out."

"We have not found the right end yet, but we have made some advance. When we reach the homes and the home life——" He gave a sigh. "We must begin with the children. And the puzzle is to keep them right through life."

She had tried two or three experiments that had ended disastrously. She had changed a household to commodious and clean quarters; she had provided clothing, plain but comfortable; she had stocked their pantry. There were a mother and two girls large enough to work, three younger children. The mother had been deserted two years before. Through an agency she had obtained situations for the girls. A fortnight afterward she had found the drunken husband and father snugly ensconced, the room the picture of dirt and untidiness, three boarders crowded in, and the plain garments exchanged for some tawdry finery that Kitty had wanted for a dance.

And Meg didn't like her place and wouldn't stay. The work was too hard and dirty.

Then she had turned her attention to the children. She had known about the little darkies at home, but she was appalled at the depths of depravity here; the angel faces that could smile up into yours and tell a lie with both pathos and glibness. At last she had settled on two or three lines, and kept steadily at them through discouragements or solace. How did Tessy manage to keep so bright and cheerful?

Dell had begun her intellectual pursuits with high hopes as well. The Shakspere Club had promised a world of enjoyment. Some of the readers were a delight to one's senses. But when they disputed points and party spirit ran high, when fierce criticisms and petty comments were made on each other's methods and beliefs, and the club broke up in confusion, wrangled and re-formed, her name was not on the membership rolls. The Art Club had been beyond her from the beginning, yet now and then one made a charming acquaintance, and on the whole she rather liked it.

But there were so many ambitious, discontented, petty-minded people, trying to do some great thing, and failing in social recognition, ready to pull down their neighbor, carping and sneering at successes they could never achieve.

"It is the way of the world largely," Bertram answered her indignant outburst, with a smile. "I let them go their ways; I cannot convert them to my thinking. And when I find real merit, real truth, and earnestness of high and noble aims, I take this person in the circle of my likes, and do not prick myself on the briars of the others oftener than I can help."

It seemed insincere, but she found the uses of it. Milly helped with her added experience, her charming fashion of seeing the best everywhere. There were many delights, and many splendid people when one found them out. She thought she liked humanity better in the individual than in the aggregate.

Fanny had met with some incidents to laugh at, and was bright at luncheon time. Dell looked over invitations.

"There are two you will like, Fanny, private theatricals for charity, and this musicale."

Among the mail was a letter from California. They had finished their luncheon and gone upstairs, Dell taking her pretty easy chair, Bertram's gift, for rest.

Alice's babies and Alice's husband, the Ashtons, some guests who had been staying with them, one a gentleman who had been on an Arctic expedition, another fresh from Japan. What they had said and done and read. "Mr. Drayton has reached New York ere this, and we want you to meet him again, and hope Bertram will have a little time to cultivate him. Oh, if you could rouse him to something! What a shame to waste life this way!"

And then, last of all, came the bad news. Gifford had gone away suddenly, with the merest little note.

"He has been so very saving the whole three years, taking few holidays and denying himself almost every pleasure, never discussing his plans, if he had any. Bevis wouldn't have him teased by any officiousness on our part. He heard some six or eight months ago that Gifford had invested in some silver mining stock, and he advised him to get rid of it as soon as possible; Gifford answered that he was old enough to know his own business, and that he meant to strike out for something better. He was not going to spend his years in a petty

place like that. His contract had expired, and he was merely staying on by the month. Six weeks ago the company collapsed, and the mine was proved worthless. And when we heard, he had gone to try his fortunes elsewhere—we were not to worry about him. Bevis has sent everywhere. He seems almost to have dropped from the face of the earth to the unknown. The anxiety has driven us wild, yet how curious it is that life must go on in the face of the greatest sorrow. Of course if you hear anything you will let us know at once."

There was a page or two more of anxious fear, the dreadful fear that Gifford might repeat the old story. Dell drew long breaths of pain and apprehension, of tenderest sympathy as well. Was the work of that past summer, so rich in reward it seemed then, to go for nothing? Oh, what a tangle life was! At six-and-twenty it looked hard to unravel. What if it went on growing more perplexing!

Presently she told Fanny. But then Fanny had not seen Gifford in almost six years, and wasn't he always in trouble of some kind? It was dreadful to lose his money, but perhaps he could be successful again, and really, how could Lyndell help by worrying about it?

Mr. Drayton came in during the evening. He had not made up his mind how far he approved of Miss Sherburne's marriage or her hero. As for Dr. Carew's position and attainments, no fault could be found with those. Already he had heard him highly spoken of at his friend's club. Mrs. Carew was proud of him evidently; her eyes kindled and her cheeks brightened at the mere mention of his name. He wondered if he would have chosen this man if she had been—well, his sister, for instance. Still one rarely chose his sister's husband.

He had been to England and to Trenholme Court since he had seen her. Yes, Edith was Mrs. Kingsley, and very happy. They still talked of Dell's visit, and dwelt upon it with a good deal of pleasure.

James Murray, with his pretty young wife, came in to call, and Lawrence, who wanted to see the doctor, but meanwhile a little bright sparring with Fanny entertained him.

"After all," thought Dell, "Fanny fills quite a space in the world's economy. Her voice has been cultivated, and in a good humor it has a pleasant, piquant sound."

Dell was quite near Mr. Drayton. They had been looking over some photographs. He felt he was making an unwarrantable stay. But there was a look in Mrs. Carew's eyes—how could he read her eyes so readily? It gave him an inexplicable feeling.

She turned a trifle. "I heard from the Osborne's," she said, under her breath. "You know about the trouble?" How did she feel so assured?

"Oh, yes! Osborne wrote to me at once." Then her interest was about this miserable cousin!

"Oh, can nothing be done?"

Reese Drayton would have done a good deal for her at that moment. The earnest imploring eyes touched his soul. He knew then he had one.

"Why, they *are* doing. Mrs. Osborne has been wild about him. Are you all sure he is worth so much care and anxiety?"

"Is not every human soul worth something in God's sight? And when it is dear to you——"

"May I come in and talk it over to-morrow morning? It needs some consideration. And there is no opportunity now," glancing around.

Mrs. Murray appealed to her, and she said hurriedly to Drayton, "Yes, to-morrow at eleven."

The doctor entered and greeted all the guests cordially, taking a moment's amusement in referring to the entertainment of last evening. Then Drayton wished them adieu, and the doctor carried off Lawrence to his office. Mrs. James had been asking Miss Beaumanoir to take a drive with her. She had a dainty pony phaëton. They would go up the new Boulevard to Jerome Park, if the day was bright. There had been a succession of lovely days, too beautiful to last much longer.

That made everything come about right. Yet Dell was wondering what she could tell Mr. Drayton, and what he could do that Bevis Osborne had not done. Was she in any way answerable for her cousin? But she could not let that summer's work, so dear to her heart, go without some effort. It was one's business in this world to keep on trying.

Lawrence was preparing for some examinations. Bertram came upstairs and gathered up a few pages of his precious manuscript that he wanted to revise; he could put it in during the intervals of coaching Larry. He glanced in Dell's room, where she and Fanny were gossiping, and advised them to get a full measure of beauty sleep to-night.

Mr. Drayton was puzzling over the fact of Mrs. Carew's interest in her cousin. Was it a girl's unreasoning sympathy for a young fellow who had loved her—who loved her still, perhaps? Yet he had known he could not marry her. He had not seemed averse to her engagement. Or was it a very strong case of cousinly regard? He had an odd longing to go to Sherburne House, to see all this strangely mixed up lot of cousins who seemed

so fond of one another. He wished he had grown up with some relations who might have made demands upon him for education and advancement. In all his four-and-thirty years he had never taken a vital interest in any human being. He had been generous with his money, but that had come to him. He had paid college debts for two rather weak-toned fellows, one for the sake of a mother who was helping him to pull through, the other because the poor youth stood alone, and expulsion would have been inevitable. The first one had proved worthy, the second had gone down among the whirlpools later on. He had subscribed to charities when he fell among civilized people, but he was not of a philanthropical turn. All these years he had just sought his own pleasure—no, idle amusement would be the correct term. He had learned a great deal, and no one was any better off for it; he was not "better off" himself.

Something Mrs. Osborne had once said never dropped out of that conglomerate—was it brain or mind? "Dell has been the salvation of us all!" Then she had glanced up at her husband with smiles and tears, and a brief gleam of mysterious knowledge had passed between them like a beautiful swift ray of light. Why should he want to know about the girl and her doings? She was safe and happy with the man of her choice, her girlish hero. Suppose she had waited to choose until she was six-and-twenty? What did girls know about women's lives? What foolish, unworthy things boys did in their youth!

He sat there in the end of the cosy drawing room that had a homelike look so different from most houses, the aspect of real living. How did anyone manage to put in that? What lovely eyes she had—deeper, fuller of meaning than the girl's had been.

"I am going to be frank," he was saying. "If I belonged to the Philalethes I might confuse meanings and polish truths until there were no rough edges. I can't see what there is or was in Gifford Lepage for you two women to care so much about beyond the tie of relationship. He is a sort of morose, unsocial fellow, good at business and despising it, holding himself above it as if he was fitted for something higher. A man with energy does come out or come up to the true standing of his life. We all know there are wretched professional men who keep at the lowest round when they might have made a success elsewhere, half-fledged poets, daubs of artists. It may be heroic spending your life in a vain struggle, but it seems a waste to me. I should have liked him better if he had taken his work cordially. He could have had an enjoyable life out there. Sometimes he really was not pleasant to get along with, and only his superior abilities saved him. He was for hoarding up everything, as if he meant to be rich. Well, that was not so bad. Frugality isn't a common vice among young people. And about that silver business. Osborne found out quite by accident he had been investing. There was a set of sharpers in it—Bevis thought so then, and events proved him right. So he went over to Grandon Park and warned him. They had a quarrel, I am sorry to say——"

He was watching her face. "Oh, poor Gifford!" she cried.

The deep and tender pity angered him.

"I think Mrs. Osborne deserves the most sympathy. She tried to make it up. She was angelic, I know. They were all sore and hurt. An angry man says things hard to bear, and they had been the best of friends

toward him. What madness possessed him? for while things were going swimmingly Mr. Park advised him to sell, but the young man thought his faith better than another's experience. Then the crash came. The whole thing went to smash. It had been a fraud from the beginning. Osborne *was* persuaded, entreated,"—smilingly,—"to go over and see him. It was very noble after the bitter things that had been said. But Lepage had gone, no one knew whither."

She had not heard as much from Alice of the whole truth, though many particulars had been given. She could only think, with Drayton, what madness had possessed him? But she remembered Aunt Lepage's temper and unreason. And if he had plunged into the old dissipation! She knew that was what Alice feared.

"And there is no way of reaching him?" Dell cried despairingly, the lustrous eyes humid with tears.

"Do you care so very much? Oh, yes, there are ways of finding him. You can't hide from anyone very long, if the pursuer is in earnest. See how criminals are run down."

She colored, and her eyes drooped.

"You see," he said, in an indifferent tone, as if he was not so much interested after all, "Osborne would take it up if anyone insisted. He did try a little, but he was feeling vexed over the whole thing. Five thousand they knew he sunk in the mine,—no great sum, to be sure,—but he could have done so much better with it, and when one had saved it up in that way!"

"Oh, I could write to Mr. Osborne. I am glad you suggested it——"

"Did I suggest it?" He colored a little, but she was not looking at him. "If you would let *me* appeal to

Osborne! We have grown very—what shall I say?—chummy, friendly," laughing a little. "A man can say things, can think up methods, where another man is concerned. Yes, do let me take it in hand."

"You are very kind. And I am afraid we shall bore you with our family troubles. I can't tell you all the the reasons I have for wanting to find him."

He could guess at one or two. He put them in the plural, but the one great one overshadowed any other. He had seen men under great stress go down the swift tide of dissipation. No one had intimated this was the young man's failing, but it might be an irresistible temptation. He hated and despised drunkenness himself.

"I am going to ask you not to say anything to Mrs. Osborne at present," he exclaimed, in a casual tone as if it was merely preference.

"I think I should not have," with a faint little smile. "And if anything comes of it you will let me know at once?"

"Something *will* come of it. Yes, you shall know."

"She will tell the doctor, of course," he mused as he emerged into the street. "A wife as young as that never keeps any secrets."

But Dr. Carew was away all the afternoon at a difficult and painful operation, and was so tired that evening he lay on the sofa and asked her to play, and went sound asleep.

"Don't write to-night," she pleaded, when he roused.

"No, dear, I am dead tired. And after preaching rest to others, I must not be a castaway myself."

Reese Drayton would have been amazed to know how completely her cousin went out of her mind.

CHAPTER XV.

AFTER DINNER.

THE little dinner party in Fanny's honor was quite delightful. There was one young lady, a fine musician, and the rest were young married people. Lawrence Murray, Mr. Curtis, and Reese Drayton were the unmarried gentlemen.

"It is rather odd," Dell said to Bertram, "but we know so few *young* men. Milly is in the next round, and as I have not been called upon to provide entertainment to 'sweet sixteen,' I have never discovered my woeful lack;" laughing brightly.

"I think Fanny can hold her own with the next round;" and a mirthful light gleamed in his eyes. "I don't know whether Curtis or Drayton is the most *épris*. I never thought her so entertaining. I wonder——"

"Oh, she nor they are the least bit in love. I begin to fancy with Ethel that she isn't the marrying kind."

"There's plenty of time. I always supposed she would make a very worldly marriage. No, that was not wonder," and a sweet, solicitous gravity hovered about his face. "I wonder if I have not made *your* life rather too grave? I've been so much engrossed. I never was much of a dancing fellow, you know, except at Sherburne, and then we were all young together, in spite of any difference of years. But I want you to have the best of life, of love——"

"As if I did not!" There was frankness and tenderness in her eyes, and he kissed down in the sweet truth on her warm, throbbing lips.

"And the holiday will be sweeter because we have earned it. But I cannot have you growing old."

She took a few graceful steps, smiling gayly.

"Does that look old? And so long as you remain my lover"—with beseeching sweetness.

"I shall be your lover always."

Lyndell was extremely charming that evening. She was very happy, and that made her radiant. Life had not been dull, even if she found her husband more closely occupied than she had imagined. She could not go meandering through country ways as she had with his father, though now and then they took a delightful drive. The first year they had not kept house, and she had almost lived at Mamma Murray's. Morna had come home with a fresh, fair young Scotch lover, who oddly enough bore the same name as her own, only some time he would be the Laird of Murray, as he was his grandfather's heir and the only male representative of the family. His mother and his three sisters had all gone down to the pretty Morna, who had at first refused, and then been over-persuaded by love's logic. Mamma Murray had been inconsolable, and Dell was her comforter. But Morna had been home twice; last autumn with her pretty boy, and now she did not seem so far away. Then James was married, and Grandmamma Murray was busy and sweet and cordial, her cheeks still pink, her chin just getting to be daintily double, and her hair soft as silk, with scarcely a white thread.

Then there had been the new house, Milly, and delightful receptions, going to clubs and meeting famous people,

studying and reading and doing no end of charity work. Yet the life was curiously different. *Was* it on the outside? And now she had begun to ask if one ever went down to the real heart of things. She had outgrown the girlish enthusiasms. There was a space and vacancy in the next things; they did not seem to meet in glad accord.

There were doctors and professors who dropped in now and then and sat a long while over the dinner discussing bodies, souls, and spirits, touching the verge of materialism dissecting with such mental fineness and separation that she felt dazed afterward, as if even her own body was unreal. She shuddered over the awful unknowable where speculations had to stop. Her own soul cried out that they could not take God from the universe.

"My dear child, these theories are as old as the universe. Job and his friends had them at their tongues' end," said Dr. Carew. "Don't allow them to disturb you."

"But you—Oh, Bertram!" and her face was alight with terror.

"I call the first force God. I trust I always shall. Still there are profound mysteries in nature, in the universe, and generations may pass away before they are made plain. Don't worry about these things, my darling."

Yet strange questions would obtrude the more she saw of real life, the seething misery below the surface. It was as if there were a half dozen worlds, each one dropping lower into misery so hopeless, one wondered why these people wanted to live. Did God put them here to drag out this horrible existence?

Fanny's visit had happened opportunely. There was a useful purpose for her in the world, even when she had quarreled with one cousin and flown to another. It took Dell out of the tense round of thought. Fanny laughed at Dell's strenuousness. She dragged her out to picture galleries, though she herself didn't care for the pictures. There was always someone to talk to whom you had met last night or the night before. There were great men coming and going, reading and lecturing.

"Not that I care so much for what they say," announced Fanny, with the utmost nonchalance; "but it is nice to have heard them and seen them, it is something to talk about when all else fails."

Mr. Drayton became so frequent a visitor, so convenient a friend, that it was rather amusing. Dr. Carew was greatly interested in him. He sometimes rallied him on his aimless life.

"Set me about some work, then, Carew. I am like the man standing in the market place. 'No one hath hired me,'" he said, one rainy evening, as they were lingering over dinner. Fanny had gone to pour tea for a reception, and to stay to a small and early dance. Drayton was to go to the last part. Dell said he made a hardship of dancing.

"A penance for past sins of omission," he had replied.

"What are you going to do with that great estate in California?" the doctor asked abruptly.

"Well, wait until some man comes along and hires, or wants to buy it," glancing up with a touch of humor. "And if they wanted to hire me——"

"Well, why not? See here. Go out and build a city."

"But there is Grandon Park. Opposition to imposition."

"And the imposition is——"

"There was a clause put in the first deed whereby I was to be debarred from selling to any rival company for five years. Only four have gone. But, strange to say, I have not had a single offer that amounted to anything."

"And the Park?" Carew inquired incisively.

"Has prospered beyond anticipation. It is a thriving colony. They raise, they pack, they can. They have a fine sawmill. They build houses, and hotels. It was not a speculation to boom corner lots," laughingly, "but an industrial venture, one of those curious equality things where all was *not* held in common, but distributed as a man had money and industry. I couldn't believe the desert could be made to bloom in such a short space of time."

"That is the best and wisest theory of advancement."

"You have not gone over to socialism, then? Yet you have theories mightily like it."

"I have bought a house and married a wife," returned Carew, smiling up to the head of the table.

"And you go to the Philalethes!"

"Yes; to hear all sides. Strange, that a set of men or a society who disbelieve the Bible, interdict it altogether, should harp on the Acts of the Apostles, that can certainly have no real place in their world. 'As any man had need' they sold their possessions and ministered unto them. Men are doing that now, every day, without any fuss. A friend of mine sold some stock a week ago and turned over five thousand dollars to a much-needed home. For years many poor souls will reap the benefit, as they have need. But if he had distributed it among a thousand blatant socialists—the saloons would have been the richer, of course."

"Shall I build a hospital?" with amused inquiry. "I will give you the ground, Carew, if you can start it out there. No, not a hospital, but a sort of home or settlement——"

"That is one of the methods of the future that men may take up, unless speculators pre-empt the ground. Baron Hirsch is doing it for the down-trodden of his race. The great end and aim of our charities ought to be to teach people to help themselves. Every year our charity list grows larger. There is not employment enough in shops and factories. The idle soon become the vicious."

"But would they go? Do they want to work?"

"Work wasn't given as a blessing in the first instance," rejoined the doctor dryly. "I think the most of us who have rewards for our labor, intellectual or material, do not realize how depressing it is to work with no hope of reward. We see what an incentive the prospect of a home is to most men. But the poor cannot have them in the larger cities, and yet they must be near their work, so they must be crowded in like sheep."

"And you propose to put the work and the homes together?"

"Precisely. Your Grandon Park began at the right end."

"Well, send out some colonists. I will give you the land to start with. I am willing to do good not by stealth, but by proxy."

"My colony must buy it in the end. Yes, I see people every day who would gladly go. The children would be brought up in a clean, wholesome atmosphere. There are unimproved places in many directions that could be settled this way. I have great faith in it. Every year

we spend an enormous amount on feeding and housing these people, and raise batches of criminals."

Dr. Carew paused suddenly and glanced at his wife. There was a gleam of amusement in his face.

"Do you remember, Dell, that we talked this over when you first returned from your visit? Drayton, we formed a conspiracy against you in true socialistic style. I wanted you to divide this world's goods; and I didn't suppose I should ever see you to prefer my request in person."

Dell blushed with charming embarrassment.

Had she really talked about him, then? He glanced from one to the other, and half smiled.

"So, if you find me prodding you up to your opportunity, you may set it down as a deep-laid scheme."

"I have no missionary gift. But if you like to try the experiment I can well afford to give away what has cost me nothing."

"No, I want you to try it yourself. Interest Bevis Osborne. I will provide some people. Later we might consider a sanitarium, where expenses could be kept at the lowest point, and the stay unlimited—until health was re-established. There are thousands of people dying for the lack of leisure, and the solace of a little pleasure. Think also of the patients waiting impatiently for me in the office,"—lifting his bright smiling face to them, as he rose and bowed. "I shall leave Mrs. Carew to complete your conversion."

"You could not leave me in better hands," the guest replied.

They walked through to the drawing room. Drayton dropped on the piano stool and began picking out a nocturne, skipping some parts, and lingering over the most exquisite strains.

"Oh," he began presently, "do you remember that little Spanish farewell? Mr. and Mrs. Osborne play it now in a marvelous fashion."

Then he went on again. Dell was considering if Bertram could bring about this pet desire of his! He had thought of Virginia and Florida, but the industrial advantages were greater on the Pacific Coast. When you had conquered nature, the inertia of the people did not confront one. Ah! if Gifford could only be there, with his experience. She had been bitterly disappointed in him. Had all her prayers and endeavors gone for naught?

Drayton rose presently, and glanced at his watch. He had promised Fanny to come and dance. He would rather stay here and watch this changeful face, even if she did not say anything.

But she rose as he was crossing the room.

"You have not heard?"

"There has been hardly time."

"I wonder—was Mr. Osborne——" in a hesitating, irrelevant manner.

He knew what she meant. "Oh, Osborne is all right!" he answered cheerfully. He hated to go and leave her alone. Would she be fretting over her cousin?

Lyndell was still sitting up when the revelers returned home at midnight. After the patients, had come the book, for Dr. Carew had wasted so much time he had not even looked in.

"I have been trying to infuse a little enthusiasm in the dancing," Fanny said sharply. "Your men are sticks or wound-up toys. Think, Dell, how we dance at home! It doesn't bore us, and the men don't look as if they were going to execution."

"I will promise to do better next time," said Drayton meekly, but there was a remoteness in his tone.

"There may not be any next time."

"Alas! alas! My punishment is greater than I can bear."

"Nonsense! I endured the slow-footed dancing, and still live. Good-night!" in an airy fashion, dismissing him.

"How trying that man is at times! He seemed in a dream to-night. And he *can* be delightful. The only compensation was that he belonged to me for the time being, and the girls made big eyes at him."

"He isn't really a dancing man," said Lyndell. "And yet it is curious, he is as much at home in society as if he had never strayed outside of civilization."

"I suppose he is your true cosmopolitan. All things to all men, but never a lover to women. He acts sometimes like a big, spoiled boy; he is delicately flattering; he is your 'most devoted,' when he has that part of the play, but it *is* play. He hasn't any real heart. Dell, if I was as elegant and serene as Milly, as handsome as Violet, and as rich as—well—an heiress, I'd capture him for the sake of refusing him."

"I do not think he would care for money; he has enough of his own, and he sows that broadcast. And he is not an ardent worshiper of beauty. In fact——"

Dell was just about to say that she had never seen him affect the young and pretty girls. But Fanny could not set up for a beauty, and every year she was leaving the glamour of "sweet and twenty," farther behind her. She affected to laugh about it, but Dell knew it was not an exhilarating subject.

"You will see! When he is about forty he will marry

the youngest and prettiest girl within his reach. And she will jump at him, and think she has captured a demigod. Dell, you were wise to marry your first love, and keep your faith in the world, in men. There, good-night! I don't know why I grumble, for I had a real good time."

Fanny went to her own room, and walked straight to the long mirror, turned up the light, and surveyed herself, swallowed down a great lump of something like mortification, in her throat. Her life would always be a disappointment. Why had she not taken her first lover and settled down, and not minded? But the people who fell in love with her were the ones she did not want.

"What a fool!" and she laughed satirically. "I may as well go on and have the good times."

Dell sat leaning her chin in a little sort of rest, made by her hand. If it were not quite so late she would go across to the little study and lie on the sofa, and watch the pen gliding over the paper, swift as a skimming bird, then stopping as if its flight had struck hard against some new idea that must be considered. She could see the lines come in his brow, the flexible mouth move, settle to forcible questioning. She told him once he thought with his lips, he worked them so much when he was writing. Then, the suddenly upraised eyes fixed on some point as if he meant to wrest the answer to his query out of some inanimate object. Why had she not gone early in the evening? She was never in the way, she knew. She had said at first: "Do I interrupt you?" and he had answered smilingly, "Not unless you talk to me. I like to have you there."

But the writing had stretched on and on. There were new thoughts, new experiences, beliefs and theories to

modify, to compare, to collate. Every day he grew more absorbed. Would it ever come to an end?

She was tired to-night, tired of everything. There was a great deal in her days; she had been so proud and eager about the work, that at first Bertram had restrained her. But it had fallen into a round. And the pleasures had lost their zest. The pictures seemed on the same lines, just colder or warmer in tone; plays were stilted and tiresome. Music still held its charm, but she wanted someone to enjoy it, to *feel* it with her. So few people seemed to understand the height and depth. There were bored faces and fretful voices, careless criticisms of the most sacred things.

Only to-day someone had said flippantly: "Oh, of course, I take part in all the charity work. It's *de rigueur* nowadays. But does it really amount to anything? You get one batch of wretched children off to homes and institutions, and another batch swarms in. And these grow up, go out and marry improvidently, and make work for the next generation of givers and doers. It is an endless chain."

If they could be taken out to clean, cheerful homes, and given something of their very own to strive for, if Mr. Drayton, and many another who merely sauntered through life an idle spectator, would join in the great work, it might be done. Was he not almost ready to see, almost persuaded?

But quite persuading people to the practical work, she had found a difficult thing. The visions were so much more attractive; the real labor, the small results, disheartening. Oh, how had Miss Neale kept so bright and hopeful and inspiriting all these years, when her early dreams had been swept away? Yes, there had been a

little motherless child, there had been her bereaved brother to comfort. Dell folded her empty arms across her heavy heart—she had that heart's desire, the dream, and almost despair of her girlhood. What if God meant that this must be all, that her other endeavors should be in his vineyard.

She remembered when the soft chime of the clock struck one. Then two passed unheeded. She was sitting there with wide-open eyes, and still folded arms, when a voice exclaimed almost impatiently:

"Dell, child, what are you doing up this time of night! Fanny came home hours ago. Do go to bed."

He was a little fretted about a lost thought that broke a connection in his research through a mental field only this morning. He had been standing here by this window. He went straight to it and, parting the curtains, glanced up at the stars that had passed their meridian, the countless worlds of which one knew nothing. What a force it must be to put them there and keep them in their cycles. And the same force created man's mysterious brain, that was acted upon, and influenced by causes yet unknown, and, at the best, guessed at by the chain of circumstances. And every brain was like a beautiful star revolving in its orbit, or some wild lawless meteor scattering death and destruction as it flew from the space designed for it, or before the time it had reached its pure, orderly, compact state. Ah, he remembered now—it would take but a moment to jot it down.

He went swiftly out of the room again. Was there something greater than she to his life?

But why should she sit here dreaming over the few things she had not, longing for the love and thought that would come again to-morrow when there was a moment's

leisure? She had so much. And there was Gifford, who had nothing, who might be in the meshes of destruction. Why was she not praying for him? Could Mr. Drayton find him, and save him, when Alice and Mr. Osborne had failed? If so, she should owe him a debt of gratitude.

Everything looked so different in the bright morning sunshine. She had slept soundly and late, and her first thought was annoyance that she had not heard her husband. In the perfect life and union of two souls could not one be awake to and interpret any coming and going? And when one failed——

He had been here and left two half blown roses and some geranium leaves on the little table beside her. He had thought of her, and she had not been in the fine, intuitive mood to reciprocate. Perhaps—— What would Milly have done? She had come to wondering what Milly would do as mistress here—she could never quite shape the thought—as Bertram's wife.

Fanny was in the breakfast room curiously fresh in a soft scarlet gown, with a plentiful garniture of cream lace and cream ribbons.

"Look at the piles of letters! There's one from Violet, and I do hope she is coming up. And one from Archie. What a wretched fiasco he has made of his life! Uncle Stanwood was so vexed about his resigning and going into business. And all from that miserable marriage. And,—did I tell you Dell?—the mother made some sort of foolish or poor marriage and was divorced, and actually married very well—a lumber merchant, at Seattle, I think. And he came near being sent to Congress in the last election. What queer whirligigs time brings about! I suppose Mrs. Archie would have visited her mother in Washington!"

Fanny laughed satirically.

"But oh, do see what Violet says! No one but mamma thinks I am worth writing to."

"Why, Violet and Mr. Amory are coming up to the city! And she wants us to look at several suites of rooms. Here are the addresses. Miss Amory and nurse, of course. They all want her to leave baby at home——"

"The idea!" interrupted Fan. "A hen with one chicken. I don't remember that Milly was so foolish. Why, that will be quite resplendent! I've had some attention paid me as 'a cousin of Dr. Carew's wife,' and a 'sister of Mrs. von Lindorm, one of the favorite Southern writers, you know'; now it will be 'Mr. Paul Amory, the artist.' Well, what kind of stars are they that shine with a reflected light? I never can remember, and I always hated astronomy."

Bertram entered and went straight to his wife, taking her face in both hands and looking tenderly into the eyes, as he kissed her.

"You were a very bad girl last night," he said, "and you are heavy-eyed and pale this morning. You must get more sleep. You and Fanny are too dissipated."

"She could have gone to bed at nine last night, for all me," declared Fanny. "And we shall be worse than ever, for Violet is coming. Mr. Amory will want to make the rounds of all the clubs and receptions, and goodness only knows whether we will have time to go to bed at all. Ethel was put out because they wouldn't settle in Washington after the holidays. She wants the cream of everybody. And I am the skimmed milk," laughingly.

"Yes, I heard from Amory; I am glad he is coming up. I shall hand him over to Frank Curtis, who is an admirable cicerone, and who knows everybody."

There were invitations, notices of this and that meeting, appeals to charity. Two of these she passed over to Bertram, who shook his head and declared them frauds. Archie's letter she merely glanced at; it was too long to read. Bertram skimmed over a medical pamphlet, full of a wonderful new discovery for consumption. Aunt Julia and Tessy completed the list. But Fanny did not mean they should read unsocially in peace, and kept up a running fire of comment.

All the morning there were what Fanny denominated parish calls, and she insisted it was quite as bad as being a clergyman's wife. Couldn't she interest Dr. Carew in this or that plan for the advancement or the amelioration of some strata of humanity? He was so much engrossed with his hospitals and everything, it was quite useless to try to see him. Aunt Jue's letter was read between times: the mother's plaint over her boy who was now alone, his wife having gone to visit her mother. "Perhaps it would have been better to keep them nearer by," she confessed. "And the child, Archie's little girl, that I begged to have sent to me that she might learn what a real home and home love was like. Oh, Dell, am I wicked in coveting it, the little girl I have so desired? If its mother cared for it, I could be resigned. But I have a horrible fear that I do not dare to breathe to anyone, that she does not mean to come back to him."

Dell thought of Milly's early sorrow. Yes, there were troubles harder to bear than death. Perhaps one could not expect in a large family circle that everyone should be fortunate, but this was the only marriage among the cousins that was really unhappy. Archie had made a sacrifice in giving up the profession he had been edu-

cated for, and if it brought about no beneficial result it would be worse than wasted.

His letter she gave to Bertram in one of the few precious intervals when they were alone. She sifted her letters now, and only offered him the cream, there was so little leisure. There was hardly time to live as life should be lived. Sometimes she felt puzzled and afraid. She was not quite certain how much renunciation was demanded.

"Archie is a brave fellow," Dr. Carew said, in a softened tone. "The thought that upholds us in such experiences is that life is a discipline, and not the full fruition. And we who are happy——"

His arms were about her and the head came down on his shoulder. And she had been questioning and making herself miserable because of a few things that were not exactly denied, but put off, like a pleasure promised to a child to-morrow or next week! She would come to it in time. And this other life might never come to it, this life that longed for and was fitted for the delights of home. She had almost echoed Aunt Julia's plaint for the little girl, and here was a soul to whom the blessedness had been given and taken away, not by the hand of God,—one could be resigned to that,—but by a cruel human hand that had thrust itself in and played discord with the finest notes of the soul, set it to a perpetual jarring.

"We who are happy." It was a sweet sounding psalm to her.

CHAPTER XVI.

IMPERFECT ADJUSTMENT.

THERE was a month of such pleasurable excitement that Lyndell Carew did not have a moment to ask herself whether she was happy—at all events she was not unhappy, and when bedtime came she was too tired to think, too tired to pray, she realized sometimes, and she comforted herself with the thought that God knew all; that he did not need to be told. Yet she wondered what his will was about the many puzzles.

Mr. and Mrs. Amory were sought after, and had no end of receptions in their honor. Mrs. Amory was raved over by artists and poets. At eight-and-twenty she still kept the rare golden tint of her hair and the lovely complexion of girlhood. The child was a second edition of her beautiful mother, but shy in the extreme. Even Dell, who generally captivated children, had hard work to win the dainty little sprite who was always sheltering herself behind mamma or nurse.

"Perhaps it is just as well," said Violet. "Grandmamma thought there must have been some severe system of repression, but abroad, children are not made the head and front of offending. You should see her at Sherburne House. Tessy makes the loveliest mother in the world, and as for Leonard, he is going to be papa over again. Oh, Dell, it seems so queer when I think of our year abroad, when we were such young girls—younger for our years

than the girls are now. Milly and I talk it over. Nora is growing up charming. There will be a second edition of the old times at Sherburne House, when they are young people. And we all hope Aunt Aurelia will live to a good old age. But, my dear, you must have some part and lot in the matter."

Dell colored, and then her eyes filled with tears. Yet if she had no part in the joy of household gain, was it not infinitely better that Aunt Aurelia should have it to round the evening of her life?

There was such a continual coming and going, and Mr. Amory almost became the head of the house while Dr. Carew was so much engrossed.

"Another month or two will see me through," Bertram explained. "If I could devote my time for a few weeks just to literary pursuits—but then I should miss a good deal," smiling interestedly. "Not a day but I find a new fact, or something to modify."

"Hasn't it been a sort of Penelope's web, Dell?" asked Mr. Amory, glancing mischievously over to Lyndell. "Doesn't he pull out at night all he did the day before? Carew, you must have a magnificent physique to stand so much. But I am afraid most of you people are burning your candle at both ends. Dell isn't as rosy and as spirited as she used to be, and you are growing thin by the day."

"I am trying to earn a right to a holiday," Carew said proudly.

"You are all too strenuous. You overdo your pleasures, your theories, everything. I am amazed at the toilsome reasonings, and for what? Everybody is giving some grand abstractions to the world. At the club the other night there was all this discussion about the infinite

force, and inexorable passionless nature, and the divine rest to be attained, until they made it a meaningless, unsatisfying phantasy. Why not say God, and be done with it? Why not do the work for humanity, instead of projecting endless theories that never get anywhere but go round in ever-widening circles, growing thinner and thinner until the bubble bursts? And then you begin over again. Perhaps *you* don't, individually; medicine and surgery have to rest on a more secure foundation. But, now and then some brain topples over and theories are set astray. I am beginning to believe with Spencer that there is an unknowable, but it isn't God."

"We'll have you put down on the next list of speakers, Amory. The club represents the highest in culture and philosophic research that the nineteenth century has attained to, I believe. To be an invited guest is considered a compliment. To be proposed and accepted, an honor. So I took the honor," laughingly. "I discoursed on temperaments—the thing I am studying most deeply. Probably they didn't believe half I said, and didn't understand the other half. But there is the widest liberty of opinion, a wide liberty of discussion so long as you are well-bred. It is one of the places where a man must be a gentleman."

"But you refine away the very heart of things, you theorize until you have strayed so far from first principles that you do not recognize the real truth. Carlyle is right, though we tone down his wisdom and pretend it is our own. We have 'sumptuous garnitures for our lives, and we have forgotten how to live in them.' Everything is too ornate, too full of beginnings, and the threads stray off instead of being woven in one strong web."

"I have an end to achieve, and I can't stop and listen to your grumbling. There is the real heart of work here, if anywhere. When you get ready to take a plunge to the very depths, I will show you something more than this outside wrap of intellectuality."

Bertram looked at his watch and bowed himself out. A little color wavered over Lyndell's face.

"Do you suppose I have vexed him. These breakfasts are symposiums of frankness, the only time there is real family enjoyment. Dell, how do you manage to live comfortably on the outside of things? You were such a terribly earnest girl."

The scarlet flashed up into her face. A diversion prevented her answer, and she was thankful.

"A lady and a little child to see Mrs. Carew. She will not send up her name, but her business is important."

The servant delivered his message with meaning gravity.

"Yes; I will attend to it." Dell rose from the table.

That was the signal for dispersion. Violet and Amory went to their own room. Miss Pearl had eaten her simple breakfast, and now the maid had her ready for her morning walk in the sunshine.

"I don't like it," Amory began. "Do they have any real life of their own? He is off now to his hospitals and his lectures and his patients. There will be some one in to dinner to talk over a dozen new things—cases; and then the book until all hours of the morning. It is a marvel he doesn't kill himself. No wonder men wear out in middle life."

"But he isn't a man of infinite leisure like yourself;" and Violet smiled across to him as she folded the baby's garments with a soft mother touch that he noted.

"There ought to be some leisure. After the book, what?" with an air of stern interrogation.

"Oh, the colony. And you can't deny that it will be a very good thing to get that delightful, spoiled, indolent fellow Drayton interested in something. He is going out to the Pacific Coast presently. Paul, let us go out to Alice. Before we settle down we ought to take her in. And you may get fresh inspirations."

"I shall need them after all this art talk run mad, with fields of impossible pink, trees of blinding green, and lights that heaven itself would weep over. I don't want to go to the gutters for realism, but I wish there was a little more of what is real, true, simple, belonging to the first grand principles. Meanwhile, what of Dell?"

"Of Dell? Paul, don't you remember what an eager, strenuous, half-disappointed girl Dell was in Italy? She was always wanting to do something. I've often wished she had Ethel's gift of painting—you admitted that it *had* a certain degree of genius. And then it was really hard for her to see Milly suddenly blossom out as a genius. She was too whole-hearted and generous to covet what belonged to another, but she *did* want something of her own. And she has made herself a woman of note, an intellectual woman. I am surprised—I want her to talk more, for when she does she looks almost inspired. Then all this charitable work—only she is doing too much. I suppose, being a doctor's wife, these things come naturally to her. She saves Bertram a great deal."

"I'm not sure he ought to be saved in that way. Doesn't he belong to her as well as to the world? What right had he to marry her, to take her life and her interest and her love, if he does not mean to give back of his own."

"Oh, Paul, he adores her. He is very proud of her. Because we spend our time mooning over each other, and are lilies of the field, hardly of as much account as the mustard seed, since the birds *can* come and sing in its branches, do not let us disparage the real workers, who are animated with a desire to better the world. Why, I feel quite conscience-smitten when I see how much she does. And one supplements the other."

"And what supplements the home?"

"Oh, when the book is finished and the other things done, they are going off on a holiday. We cannot quite judge of their lives," she said gently.

She had a very tender place for Bertram Carew in her heart. She was proud too of the esteem in which the world held him, their old playmate. Every advance gave his father such unalloyed gratification. And Dell was a delightful hostess in her pretty home. Perhaps Violet was too much engrossed in her own husband and her own little girl to go very deeply into the other's life.

"I shouldn't feel satisfied without baby," she continued reflectively. "Somehow I don't think Dell minds much. The orphan asylums and homes and summer outings and kindergardens absorb her."

Would they absorb her always, beyond any untoward influences, Amory wondered. Interesting people were coming and going continually in her life. But Drayton haunted the house. He certainly was a charming visitor. He and the doctor were peculiar friends already. Was all this talk about the colony in earnest, or was it a mere blind to give him the friendly entree? Amory could believe Fanny was the attraction.

And he had to admit that he liked Drayton himself.

He was unable to decide whether he was a mere man of the world or not, simply seeking his own pleasure.

"Your mention of the California plan is a good one," he said suddenly to Violet. "I shall find out when Mr. Drayton means to start. He will be delightful company."

"Dear, I do wonder how long that woman means to stay. We were to go to the reading at eleven. After all, you may rail against the city with its shams and unrealities and anarchists and theories run wild, but I find it splendid! I don't see how it can tire Milly; I want a good solid year of it,—no, two winters;" and she gave a bright smile.

Fanny came in with her hat on and pretty fur coat up to her ears.

"For goodness' sake, are you not ready? I am going to order some flowers and look in the shop windows. I'll meet you at the hall."

"That woman is still downstairs talking."

"I've half a mind to stop and suggest a departure."

"Do," said Paul Amory, with calm directness.

But the voices were so earnest Fanny did not interrupt. She was glad afterward she had not acted upon impulse.

Lyndell had gone down with the certainty that it was an application for assistance. The visitor had strayed to the far end of the drawing room, where the bay window made it lighter, after taking a circuit and examining the adornments of the apartment.

"It's a stylish neighborhood," she said to herself, "but if I was a rich woman——"

Then she put the child up in the corner of the sofa. It whimpered a little. She shook it by the shoulder.

"Sit still," she said, in a threatening tone, "or I'll——"

She never was absolutely ugly to it, except in the matter of words, but it was quite afraid of her. It had been trained in the ways of obedience.

She took up a book of photographs of scenery. They did not interest her. A case beside her held a portfolio of engravings. There was a great foreign vase of some kind that had a curious perfume, and a jar of roses. By the chimney there was a cabinet of curiosities; she did not care for those. Everything was well enough in its way, but she wondered how Miss Lyndell Sherburne could feel satisfied with it.

The portière was pushed aside and Mrs. Carew walked slowly down the room, surprised a little at her guest's peculiar behavior, and the child in the corner of the sofa. The stranger rose. She was well dressed in a brown cloth suit trimmed with fur, and had a jaunty look. Her hat gave her a certain air, with its profusion of nodding plumes.

"I do believe you have forgotten me!" There was a short laugh, not particularly pleasant.

Mrs. Carew was dazed. The voice was connected with some olden memory—the face—and then the child.

"I was your cousin, Lieutenant Stanwood's wife."

"Archie!" Dell gasped. "What has happened?"

"Nothing to him;" with a toss of the head. "The happenings have been to me."

"I hope—nothing unfortunate——"

"I call it fortunate. At all events it is fortunate for me. When two people are miserable, and can only make each other miserable, the best thing for them is to go separate ways."

"And my cousin——"

"I left him in Michigan. That is his child. I went to my mother's some time ago—he may have written."

"Yes," answered Lyndell, indignant at the flippancy.

"Oh, I am not going to burden any of you with myself. I sail to-morrow for Europe to rejoin my sister, who is now a widow and well provided for. And I do not come as Mrs. Stanwood either—at least, not as your cousin's wife. The law has considerately freed us from the bond of matrimony. I confess I am greatly relieved, for it had grown intolerable. And I fancy he is satisfied."

"I do not understand——" began Lyndell.

"No, I suppose not," with her abrupt laugh. "You knew or guessed that we were not happy? I don't know how confidential he has been later on. At first I used to insist upon seeing the letters he wrote you; then I ceased to care."

"He has said nothing that you might not read," declared Lyndell haughtily.

"Well, you can hear my story now; I am not looking for sympathy from *his* people;" and she gave her head a toss. "It was a foolish marriage. I think now I must have been crazy. I might better have waited to see what would come next. I could have gone West with mamma, but I supposed then Archie would remain in the vicinity of New York. It was dreadfully mean of his father not to make any effort to keep him here. I've never forgiven him for it."

"I do not think he could have effected an exchange."

"But he might have done something before. If mamma had been here she would have moved heaven and earth to do it. I wanted Archie to resign then and

get some business here in the city. Papa's misfortune would soon have been forgotten. But he was very obstinate about it."

Had she no sense of the mortification it would have been to her husband before they lived it down? Dell shuddered at her effrontery. She glanced over at the child, who seemed to be transfixed at the sound of her mother's voice.

"It was horrid up there," with a significant nod. "After a year I came to hate it. But mamma had had no settled home then. I went away in town when the baby was born. I never saw the wisdom of God sending any child to us. I can't get up any maudlin enthusiasm over children. Of course if I was well-to-do, I shouldn't mind. It ought to have gone to Addie. It would have made a big difference in money matters to her, though she has a splendid income unless she marries again. But a great many things go contrariwise in this world."

"Archie resigned from the army," said Dell, in the pause.

"The most stupid act of all followed it. Mamma was married then, and I had threatened to leave him unless he resigned. The baby was at nurse—I really couldn't have it, and the Frenchwoman had just lost her own and was glad to take it; besides, she knew everything about children. So I said when it was a year old I would take it and go to mamma. I had the best right to it, you know. Some parties made him a proposal to go in mining business in which there was a chance to make money, they thought. It wasn't so much the money to me, though I was sick and tired of poverty, but I wanted to get away. And the stupid fellow had made all his

arrangements before he resigned, and never said a word to me!"

Her tone was full of vexation now, and her eyes snapped angrily in their dull steel blue.

"We went to a little town where there was nothing going on but a dull dinner once a week, not as much real society as in the garrison, but you get tired of people when you have them week in and week out. But in town it was simply awful! We kept house, and I hated it. Mamma seldom kept house except for a few months at a time. It was unendurable! Then I begged him to let me go away and get a divorce for incompatibility of temperament. He wouldn't consent. I don't see why, when you can't live peaceably, and divorces are so easy."

Lyndell was shocked beyond words, and could make no comment.

"Of course you're surprised, and think it all wrong, I dare say. But if you had nothing in your life you cared about—in fact, if you hated everything, you'd feel differently about it. I even offered to give up the child, for he had come to care a good deal for that. It isn't pretty either. I might get fond of a real pretty child, if I could keep a nurse and was able to dress it beautifully. Well—he wouldn't consent."

"No, I should think not!" ejaculated Dell, with a throb of thankfulness.

"You are truly married just as long as you love each other. Plenty of people believe that. Why, right here in your city they preach that doctrine. And Archie didn't love me. He was good, of course—true and kind, I mean, but we had ceased to keep up a make-believe between ourselves; I really wouldn't let him," and she

gave her irritating laugh. "There was no use of pretending. Well, this isn't a fascinating romance, so I need not linger over it. Mamma was quite comfortably settled, and asked me to come and make a visit. I had written to Addie, and she said get a divorce, by all means. Mr. Trainor was at some German baths, and the doctor said he couldn't live three months ; he was all worn out. She sent me a hundred dollars. Archie had to go away for a week, and had planned to take me. I made some other plans, and conveniently fell ill. I knew where I could get some more money, and the second day after he was gone I started with baby and a new nurse. I didn't go straight to mamma, but stopped at a town in Dakota and established baby and nurse, took out a residence, and then went on to mamma, leaving them behind. At first I said I would stay two months—I did not want him to come out. After a while he begged to have the baby. Then I made up my mind I would not give it up. Mamma said it was foolish, but I hated to give in to him, and I was afraid he really wouldn't consent to the divorce—he pretended to have some scruples about it. I left mamma and said I should not tell her where I was going. That was lucky, for he came out after me. So I kept shady and waited for my divorce. Addie wrote to me that Mr. Trainor had died, and there was a good deal of business to settle in London, and I must come over to her. She had enough money for us both. But unless I cared a great deal for the baby, she thought I had better leave it with its father, for he was the proper one to take care of it. I had written to him and sent him a copy of the divorce, and said I was going to my sister with the baby. On the journey here I have been thinking it over, and reading her letter, and I have concluded he *is* the

proper person to provide for it. I haven't any real right to burden my sister with it. I reached the city yesterday and engaged my passage. I had your address, and I have come to ask you to send the baby to its grandmother. She wanted to take it when it wasn't but six months old, and Archie would have sent it, but I wouldn't gratify her. They have been very cool to Archie and me. However, this is the best move, I see. I've given him a good scare, and that will answer."

Dell looked at her in amaze. Was this flippant, heartless woman Helena March, whom they had all tried to hope the best about?

"I suppose I've astonished you;" in a dry, hard tone. "You are all happy and prosperous, and getting your desires day by day. You can't appreciate the dreariness of the life I've lived. I love society, and gayety, and fashion, and gossip about new happenings. I should not have married your cousin, but just then we were all wild together with trouble, and it seemed the best thing. If we had been engaged a year, we should have known how little we really cared about each other, and broken off."

There was not much of a pretense about loving. It was "the best thing she could do." It offered home and refuge from poverty and overwhelming disaster. They had all judged her rightly. Yet, if something different had been done! Still, there was no real love to start with. Dell had learned a good deal about such marriages. Some she had pitied, but they filled her with abhorrence.

"And my cousin does not know?" Was not the whole thing some mocking dream? Was she wide awake? She looked over on the sofa. The baby had fallen asleep in an uncomfortable little huddle.

"He thinks she will be taken to England. He will be mightily surprised at the divorce, though he *may* have mistrusted it. But he will be glad enough to get the baby. I suppose you think it dreadfully heartless in me. It would hurt him a great deal worse if I took it, and if I had plenty of money of my own, I would."

Dell had known long before this that there were mothers without any mother love—deserted babies, children cruelly treated, beaten and maimed by their natural protectors, but these were mostly drunken, brutal, ignorant women. There were other mothers, who for guilty love's sake abandoned their families. Helena March did not belong to either of these classes. She was simply a selfish woman. She had saved herself by marrying Archie Stanwood, and now something better had offered. Why had God sent this little baby to her, when other household altars would have offered the sweet incense of thanksgiving for the blessing?

Dell crossed over to the sofa, and raised the child. Its gray cloak, with an edge of Angora fringe about the collar, was plain enough, and its silken cap had lost its freshness in the long railroad journey. Dell untied it, anxious to see what she was like. Tumbled hair, more red than golden or brown, but eyebrows and lashes almost black. A small, round face, a nondescript nose, a rather wide mouth, but a short, beautifully curved upper lip, and a broad, cleft chin.

She opened her eyes and uttered a pitiful whimper, that went to Dell's heart.

"She is pretty good, and she's always been well. She is two years and three months old now. And she is named after my sister, Addie Trainor. Archie wanted her called after his mother, but I took her to a Roman

Catholic church and had her christened. I surely could call my child whatever I chose."

There was a light tap, and Dell answered it.

"If you please, Mrs. Carew, Mr. and Mrs. Amory want to know whether they had better go on?"

"I won't detain you. We are no real relation now," with an attempt at sarcasm, and a smile meant for scorn. "I never was truly welcome. I know that, and I am no loss to the family. Of course I do not relinquish my child altogether; I may want to see her in the years to come," giving her head an airy toss. "Good-by, baby. Your grandmother will be glad enough to have you. You are at liberty to write this interview to Mr. Stanwood. I ask no favor at anyone's hands."

She gave the baby a hasty kiss and swept through the room. "I'm sorry if I have kept you from any pleasure," she added.

"You sail—to-morrow?" Dell's tongue seemed numb.

"Yes. There is no need of complimentary regrets. I shall be no loss to anyone. But I shall have much better times than as Archie Stanwood's wife. You can think of me as being happy. Adieu."

The young waiter opened the door and ushered her out. She tripped down the steps light-heartedly, glad to leave her old life behind.

Dell went back to the child. There was a touch of fear in her eyes, and she shrank a little.

"Oh, you poor worse than motherless baby! If God had sent you to me!"

She kissed down into the little face, and there were tears as well. There had been no such rapturous tenderness since the morning its father had said good-by to it. The baby understood the almost forgotten language

of love, and gave a sigh of content. Then Dell gathered the child in her arms, and went swiftly upstairs to the Amorys' room. Violet stood in her bonnet and cloak and Paul Amory was impatiently beating one hand with his glove.

"It is Archie's baby!" Dell exclaimed. "It's mother brought it here. She sails for Europe to-morrow. She has obtained a wretched Western divorce. Archie had no notice until it was granted. She meant to take the baby with her, but at the last moment—— No, it really was not out of regard for him—she did not want the trouble."

Dell flushed with the shame put upon womanhood.

"Dell Sherburne, have you gone crazy?" cried Violet.

"Are you sure it is not a fraud put upon your generosity?" asked Mr. Amory.

"Helena March brought it. She's changed, too. Why she looks almost middle-aged; no, not that—she can't be thirty. But I should know *her*, and no one else could tell the story."

"What are you going to do?"

"Oh, the reading? I cannot go now. I shouldn't listen to a word. But you must hurry off."

"I think I will not go, though I hate to miss the poet who lends to his thought 'the beauty of his voice.' I should be distracted. Go on, Paul. You will find Fanny somewhere."

"Yes. Look well into the matter, Vi."

Violet glanced at the baby in Dell's arms. "She is not pretty," exclaimed the mother of a beautiful cherub. "Oh, poor Archie! What a horrible thing to happen! Tell me what she said—the heartless, inhuman mother!"

Dell sat down with the baby on her lap, its head pressed against her longing heart, its soft little hand in hers.

"I think I wasn't very pretty when——" There was a little break in her voice and her lovely eyes filled with tears of sympathy.

"Oh, Dell, that was cruel!" and Violet flushed. "But you grow handsome by the month now. And the baby looks like Archie. Tell me all; I am just wild to hear the story. To think of her deserting her own child!"

CHAPTER XVII.

THE BLOOM OF A THISTLE.

"YOU see," began Dell, when she had finished the frigid, self-approving narrative, "she does not accuse Archie of any real fault. He was not unkind, and he was striving to do his duty in the state of life to which he did seem called. And I do believe he tried his utmost to love her—though I don't know what qualities she had to either kindle or keep alive the sacred fire. Poor Archie!"

"I suppose she was glad to marry anyone then, in all that frightful trouble. There are so many worldly marriages. Yet if the love matches were always happy! What a puzzle it is. We may be thankful she didn't do anything positively disgraceful. And if she had been here with attractive men on every side, it might have been worse."

"When she was at Beaumanoir, I remember her justifying her marriage by comparing it with Ethel's, holding herself a little higher because she had not married for money. But Ethel had family prestige, accomplishments, and society training, and she has graced her position."

"Worldliness is at the bottom of so many sins and follies. Shall we call it heredity?" smiling and uncertain. "Aunt Lepage has it in a great degree. She is so different from mamma and Aunt Jue. She was always wanting to be at the head, to have the first. And poor

Uncle Lepage, do you suppose he ever knew real happiness?"

Dell shook her head slowly. "Not until the last. And he had forgotten so much then." She colored with a sudden consciousness. For days she had only thought of Gifford incidentally.

There were voices in the hall, coming up the stairs. Fanny entered, curious, eager.

"What an adventure! A baby left on one's doorstep! Mr. Drayton is in the drawing room with a special message for you, Dell, which means you shall ask him to luncheon, and he will stir you with envy and disappointment. F. was magnificent. You don't know what you lost. I was absolutely moved. I think I picked some tears out of my ‹ yes."

Dell glanced around and then sat the baby in the great easy chair. She gave her pitiful little whimper, which was neither cry nor whine, but which went to one's heart, and stretched out her hands.

"I'll look after her," announced Violet.

Drayton wondered what had transfigured Mrs. Carew's face. Of late, in spite of all her efforts, it seemed to have grown weary—he thought famished, for its real sustenance. She was such an entertaining study to him, and had he not as much right to feel interested in mental phases as a physician, since he had made medicine a partial study? She had been leaning her face over the child, and the warmth had touched the disordered rings of hair with a fascinating softness. Indeed, she had all the tender lines of one awakened from a delightful dream, and who had not yet shaken off the influence of slumber. A delicious pink hovered cloudlike over all.

"I was so disappointed that you were not there,"

he began, and his tone moved her deeply. "F. sails for Europe to-morrow, and may be spoiled by foreign airs and graces. Such a voice—such rendition, that gave you the meaning of words as well as sentences. I never saw an audience so moved. And now we can't talk it over;" in a half-vexed tone. "I like so to talk things over with you."

"Yes." Her thoughts seemed to wander. "And I wish Mrs. Amory had not missed it."

Someone else was to sail to-morrow. How strangely circumstances were jarred together in this world, not coming of pure volition.

They were both standing, he with his hat in one hand. If someone could put her on canvas or in marble in that waiting attitude!

"Oh! I had something more to say," recalling himself. "I had a message—about your cousin." He hated Gifford at that moment, and yet the unfortunate fellow was the apparent reason for the deeper friendship. The weakness had disgusted him.

"Oh, have you found him?"

She raised her earnest eyes, the pupils dilated with apprehension, the flush on her cheek growing deeper.

"He has been found—yes. And he was very ill, in the midst of a terrible fever. He is in good hands now, and will recover." Then Drayton took a few steps across the room and back again. She was silent. For very shame's sake she would not ask the question trembling on her tongue.

"Mrs. Carew, I am going to ask you to leave the whole matter to me at present—let me judge what step is best. You know so little about men's motives, and I have seen them under every circumstance—almost

When I think it best for you to write, do not fear but that I will tell you. Will you trust me that far?"

"Oh," she returned brokenly, "I don't know how to thank you! And just now I seem to have so much on my hands. Yes; I will trust you to the uttermost;" glancing up with a faint, sweet smile.

"That shall be my reward." Then he turned a little. "Good-morning!" But he did not touch the hand she extended toward him unconsciously, and went softly out, moved in an unusual manner.

Dell did not want to suspect, and yet the horrible fear haunted her. What if Gifford had succumbed to the old evil? What grace or strength could fortify him? Surely this was not heredity, unless it was generations back. And if one was so weak—and would not call on the Greater Strength! She was ashamed of him, and her cheek burned as she thought of Reese Drayton, temperate but not abstemious, and despising excesses of this kind. She knew he had undertaken this for her sake. Would Bertram——

There was no need of troubling him with it now, while he was so busy. And perhaps, for Gifford's sake, the story might better never be told.

They were all eagerly discussing Violet's repetition of the morning's incident. The baby had fallen asleep in her arms.

"I suppose she did marry Archie simply as a refuge," exclaimed Fanny. "I think Ethel objected more to their position, or non-position," with a sharp laugh. "The Marches were like dozens of other girls, and men *did* seem to admire them up to a certain point. And, you see, there must have been some moral sense to her, or she might have eloped with someone's husband, or a fascinating young man——"

"There may have been none within her reach," interrupted Violet.

"But this divorce—it is a shame for the morals of the community that such things are allowed. It really would not stand in law, if she did not notify him," declared Amory. "What do you mean to do about the baby, Dell?"

"Write to Aunt Julia at once. She will come up."

"But hasn't Archie some rights? Why, the fellow must be wild with anxiety. Wouldn't it be better to telegraph to him?"

"Oh, yes!" answered Dell. "And I will write before we go to luncheon."

"Mr. Drayton didn't stay." Fanny's tone had a touch of vexation in it. She had been sure he would.

"Oh, I never asked him," returned Dell. "I was——" She colored vividly. How could she have been so indifferent?

"You were so occupied with what *he* had to say. I suppose it was something extremely engrossing."

"It was some word on a sad subject," returned Dell, with a dignity that awed Fanny. "But it was not as bad as I feared."

The color was gone now, and there was no taint of dissimulation in the fair face. Paul Amory felt relieved.

"I declare, Dell, you put everybody to doing charity work," was the fretted reply.

"We will send a messenger and ask him to dinner. Now, I remember, the doctor wants to see him. I beg pardon for my remissness, Fanny."

"It's nothing to me," retorted Fanny, with a heat of temper that made her angry with herself.

Dell wrote her letter in such a perturbed state of mind

that when it was gone she wondered if she had made the story clear. Anyhow, here was the baby Aunt Jue coveted; that was clear. She would come on the wings of the wind, or of love.

After luncheon Amory went out to telegraph. Pearl took a fancy to the newcomer at once. Addie was beginning to feel quite at home. She had been tossed about so much during the last six months, and had so many different nurses that she soon settled herself to any care, to any neglect as well. She was blessed with a sweet birdlike voice, and her baby sentences had a soaring sound quite fascinating, as if she tossed them upward, and no indifference could depress her.

Before night an express package came with her clothing. Not a large supply, and nothing very ornate, but all marked in full with a name they could not take to cordially, so they called her Baby, which seemed natural to her.

Lyndell had an engagement for the evening that she would gladly have ignored, if possible, but she knew she could not do it without giving offense. Bertram came in when they had reached the limit of waiting. Mr. Drayton was so familiar a guest now that they did not hesitate to discuss the occurrence of the morning before him. The talk on the masculine side was very strong and full of protest.

"Marriage is not made sacred enough, when one State can so easily undo what another has done. But if I know Archie, he will not accept this farce and fraud," said Dr. Carew. "It cannot annul marriage to a trained conscience."

"Suppose she marries again?"

"She has no moral or legal right. It would be monstrous! But I am glad she had the grace to leave the

child. I think any father would have made a fight for it."

"It must come back to education," declared Amory. "Our codes of right must be more thoroughly impressed upon the young. There is too much laxity everywhere. And why are not people educated for marriage, the most important step of life? It is not altogether a matter of individual preference or irresponsibility to any besides the two that contract it."

"We forget that we are citizens of the state, neighbors, friends. We are not to have our own way at any cost. When we elect to wreck our own lives, we generally wreck two or three others. We come back to the old truth, 'No man liveth unto himself.'"

"Dear me," said Fanny, in a low tone to Drayton, "no one would get a chance here. They are always carrying the world on their shoulders. What does it amount to? The old world goes on just the same. The children of Israel grumbled forty years in the wilderness, and set us of the towns and cities a bad example. Does human nature improve any?"

"If we make *any* personal improvement, it does. There is one sinner turned from the error of his ways."

"I am afraid I like some of my errors."

"I am afraid I like a good many of mine. Really, you ought to reform—you are so much younger, and have fewer sins to repent of. And then you might let the light of your missionary spirit shine on me. I am waiting for someone to take me in hand."

"Dr. Carew will do it, never fear. When he gets through with this dreadful book,—I should hate it, if I was Dell,—he will go at the whole world. Just let him put his little finger on you! When I was a little girl I

used to dance with him—fancy his being so trifling now. But for that recollection I should feel afraid to say my soul was my own."

"He has his finger on me," in a grave tone.

"Are you going out to that California place——"

"I am going out presently," bending his head a trifle.

"To start an institution?"

Drayton laughed. "No, I think I will build a hotel. Perhaps you will come out to visit your cousin."

"The Amorys are going. What inducements will you offer me?"

Her eyes had a piquant, laughing light.

"Remember I am not a philanthropist," she added, as they were rising from the table.

"Mrs. Heath's carriage for Mrs. Carew," the servant announced.

"And I promised to send her word about that place on Long Island," said Bertram, coming around to his wife. "They are not willing to have it rented for children, but will let it go reasonably for older people—invalids. Another year we shall own a place for these little waifs. Let me see—it must be decided to-night?"

"Yes, the time is so short. Oh, come and see Archie's baby a moment." Dell's face was alight with reflected motherhood.

"Yes, I want to. Poor Archie! Yet I have an idea he married from the highest motive of heroism, though I suspect she didn't give him much chance to decline. He was so honest himself. The worst will be if that woman should come back in a few years and demand the child."

Baby was asleep now in an improvised crib. Her cheeks were a little flushed, and the closed eyes fringed

with the long dark lashes. Bertram stooped and kissed her, and then folded his wife to his heart. If Baby could stay here! Dell was tired of having the world on her shoulders, as Fanny put it.

"I will come for you if I can," he said presently.

But it was Mr. Amory who came for her. He brought a note to Mrs. Heath, the proffer of another place for their purpose, if it was not considered too far away. They stopped to talk about it. Then Dell preferred to walk home. There was a softness in the air, an indication of spring, though there were no rustling leaves nor murmuring rivulets.

"I believe I am homesick for Sherburne House," she said, with a half unconscious pang.

"Dell, you will wear yourself out in this kind of life. It doesn't look to me like a true woman's life."

"There is so much to do. And it seems as if I was put in the place to do it. The house almost runs itself, and Bertram is so engrossed. I should feel conscience-smitten if I wasted all my time upon society."

"You are not happy in it."

Had the best and truest happiness been withheld? Then surely she ought to give freely of herself to those who had no mothers, or were worse off if they had. If she might keep Archie's baby! Perhaps there were homeless ones—she had thought of it sometimes, but not longingly. She was a little out of gear with the lack of satisfaction she had promised herself.

"You and Violet look at life from the artistic, harmonious, and beautiful side. A physician cannot. A missionary cannot. Even one trying to live up to some sort of useful life, rather than a barren existence, cannot." She hesitated and stopped.

"And you consider ours purely ornamental," he made answer, in a humorously aggrieved tone.

"No. You have shed your sunshine on Beaumanoir and Sherburne House until everyone is full of enthusiastic happiness. Milly declares you both are an inspiration. I wonder if it wasn't a little dull for her occasionally? But you see—the situations are so different. What made you think I was not happy?"

Dell's tone was sharp in its incisiveness. It also had the certain ring of incredulity.

He could not have told her then what was in his mind. It was too vague for fear, even.

"You used to be so gay and enthusiastic," he answered evasively.

"It is because I am toned down, and married, and twenty-six, instead of eighteen, and frivolous."

"You never were frivolous."

They reached the stoop. There were voices in discussion down in the office. Fanny and Mr. Drayton were in the far end of the drawing room. Dell ran upstairs where Violet sat reading. She glanced at her with an odd, laughing light in her eyes.

"Do you suppose," she asked, "that Mr. Drayton is really smitten with Fanny? I wasn't sure whether I ought to play duenna or not. I shouldn't at home. I thought when I first came it was Mr. Curtis. And then that Mr. Eldridge. For this last hour they have had the mysterious silence, or low tones, that look suspicious."

Dell laughed. So he had remained all the evening.

"Don't build your hopes on anything such a little flirt may do," said Amory.

"I am building them on Mr. Drayton. I shouldn't

object to him for a brother-in-law. I should really enjoy Ethel's astonishment."

"Fanny *is* attractive," subjoined Dell. "There is a curious quality in her——"

"Contrariness," as Dell halted for a word. "You never know just which side she will take, or how unreasonable she will be. Then you are surprised at finding her indifferent, just when you have marshaled all your forces to argue with her."

Violet turned a page in her book. Dell took the corner of the sofa and put the silken cushion back of her head. One thing was finished for the summer and off her hands. Ought she to feel that way about a good work?

"Violet, let us take Dell home with us. She's tired to death with all this work and hubbub and speculating upon the Why of the Whyness. Bertram can finish his book—he is worse than Milly, isn't he? She leaves off with serenest grace and deigns to bestow herself on common mortals. But you only see Bert at breakfast and dinner, or five minutes at a club when the talk is done with and everybody ready to go home. And if we do go to California——"

"You ought to go at once," declared Dell. "The early part of the season is enchanting. But you'll stay and stay."

"Drayton will go out. There's no use beseeching the doctor? Could we persuade Milly?"

"Perhaps Fan would object to being left out," added Violet dryly.

"And the glory of the city is waning. The Easter weddings are over and gone, and you hear of people flitting. What a strange, restless place, where you must

always be doing something or going somewhere! I do believe I should enjoy it in the summer when the crowd of people are out of it. It has changed so. It is like a a new place to me."

Fanny came up presently and went to bed at once. Dell was tired and excused herself—it had been such a wearing day. Amory's sentence haunted her. Was she unhappy? Something was lost out of her life, the vim, the zest, with which she had begun it. Was it because the grave and sadder side of things came uppermost now? All the month she had been haunted with dreadful visions of Gifford. Oh, how good it was to put the burthen off on a strong, experienced arm! No, she could not have done anything, she saw that now, only to make Bertram anxious when he had so much on his mind. She felt rested in thinking of Reese Drayton. Still, she could not imagine his marrying Fanny Beaumanoir. Why should he marry at all? She smiled to herself at the thought of his making love to anyone. The compliments and badinage of society were far removed from that.

Archie's answer came swiftly back over the magic wires, and he would follow it almost immediately. Aunt Julia could not wait to write, but telegraphed that they might expect her. Dell was in such a flurry that all her old eagerness came back, her brightness and animation, but she was growing thin, and fatigue made her pallid.

Aunt Julia reached them first. "Oh, Dell, my dear child!" was all she could say as she took Lyndell in her arms.

"It seems so strange she should have come to you——"

"Why, no! It was merely the convenience of the

thing. She really wanted to take the baby—but not because she loved it. She had counted the cost, and motherhood was too costly," Dell said, with a touch of bitterness. And *she* could have envied her.

"I have just given thanks steadily. When I heard the child had been put out to nurse, I asked for it, as you know. I said soldiers and missionaries in India often sent their children to their friends. When she would not let it come I thought she must have some love for it, and hoped this would bring them nearer together. Archie never complained, but I could guess at the dissatisfactions. There were several summer resorts around them, and she was going hither and thither. It was a blow to us when he resigned—to his father especially. All those years of education and discipline wasted. When she went to her mother's, I was afraid it was a step in separation, but one could hardly imagine her duplicity. We fear the divorce is good for nothing, and when her sister gets tired of her she will return to Archie. Is it wicked not to want her?"

"She confessed that her sister was debarred from marrying again without a great loss of fortune. And I believe there is a good deal of money."

"She has worked Archie harm enough. We have all been educated to look upon marriage as a sacred tie, and divorce allowable only under certain circumstances. And the major is sure this is good for nothing. But if she will only stay abroad, or not trouble him! Oh, let me see my little girl. I am all impatience."

"Come up to my room. They have all gone out driving, but I wouldn't let them take baby. I thought you might come, though Paul said you could not get through to-night."

Violet's nurse had the care of the baby. She was merry and laughing now, and the timid, shrinking expression had disappeared entirely. Dell guessed what might have awakened it, and was glad Aunt Julia's heart could not be made to ache by any suspicion.

Mrs. Stanwood knelt down and clasped the child to her heart, kissing her rapturously.

"I love Auntie Dell," she said, with a crooked little accent. "Does 'ou love her too?"

"Yes, my little darling."

"Den I love 'ou, too," and she gave a soft gurgle.

"She is like Archie," Aunt Julia exclaimed, with tears in her eyes. "Thank Heaven for that! Oh, Dell, I am almost afraid of myself. Pray that I may not come to hate the woman who wrecked my boy's life. And oh, how could one tell a child her mother was unworthy! Still, Helena might have sinned. And if she should marry again it will not be altogether disgraceful."

"Yes, that was our consolation."

Aunt Julia took the child on her lap and listened to her prattle, interspersing it with tender kisses. They spoke of its name and christening.

"We have called her simply Baby," said Dell.

"We must have some pet name for her. I could not endure the association;" and Aunt Jue's voice trembled with pain.

Then they talked of home as it still was to everybody under Tessy's charming reign. Of her own little boys at school, and the prayers that they might be saved any bitter trouble.

"For a happy marriage is the very blessedness and richness of the earth. We do not think enough of it. It is God's best gift to earthly lives, for it is the seal and

token of a mightier love hereafter. I suppose we are not wise enough or sufficiently developed in youth to consider these things. I did not. I married the man I loved, but it was with the consciousness that any other marriage for me would have been little short of a crime. You girls and boys have all done so well, save my poor darling. And it seems as if he had been punished for an impulse of ill-considered generosity. We shall find that that was at the bottom."

Aunt Jue wiped away some tears, that they might not fall on the baby's head, a baptism of sorrow. What would be her destiny?

"She makes me think of Archie," Dell said. "She is such a happy little thing, and grateful, Aunt Jue. You wouldn't believe it of such a baby. I think she couldn't have had real love, and she's so loving, too. I suppose babies miss it without being able to know what it is that shadows them and keeps the sun out."

"If her mother never comes back! Oh, Dell, I must pray for that, for the child's sake."

They were both too much moved to talk any more. Dell busied herself about the room in pretty, girlish ways for the sake of doing something.

"A happy marriage." Hers was among them, she kept saying to herself. No one was quite perfect, that was the earthly part of it. Violet and Paul had amusing little arguments, and Len sometimes blustered—yes, that was just the word, for all his fine breeding. A happy marriage did not mean that one's individuality must be quite lost in the other's.

The rest of the household returned. Aunt Jue's heart suffered from a quick, secret pang when little Pearl Amory came and put her face beside the child on her

knee. Pearl was extremely beautiful, and endowed with every grace, it seemed. Yet to-day Lyndell was a fine, attractive woman—a handsome woman, and Aunt Jue remembered the unpromising childhood. Indeed, Aunt Julia herself had not been as pretty as either of her sisters. Only, it seemed as if beauty ought to belong to childhood, that blessed period of unconsciousness.

There was no one at dinner save the family, and the sudden ending of Archie's marriage was a topic of animated discussion. Dr. Carew took strong ground against the general disruption of the marriage tie.

"But we shall have to admit," said Violet, "that Archie is immeasurably better off without her. When two people cannot get along comfortably, it seems terrible to insist that they shall go on making each other's life wretched."

"But wretchedness is not their duty. When we can make duty count for the first thing we shall take a real stride in advancement. We talk about it, and dress it up in moving, burning words that ought to appeal to every human soul. But in our hearts we are afraid it is a cold, rigid thing, and we long for the more seductive pleasures just now, and the duties are relegated to the future—old age, maybe, when the pleasures have lost their charm. We *can* get out of things so easily. If she had known she couldn't get out of her mistake except by taking it up courageously and living over it,—above it,—I think she would have tried. There is no real responsibility recognized in some of these most sacred acts of life."

"All that wouldn't have made Archie happy," subjoined Violet.

"I think Archie would have accepted and tried. A man does accept the result of his mistake more readily

than a woman, I believe. A woman looks to have love ready made for her. There is no love but what must be fitted and finished afterward."

"Or for discipline before." Paul Amory looked up at his wife and smiled. He had always been glad she had had the courage beforehand.

Fanny had an engagement. There were two or three callers, but the evening passed quietly in a sort of family circle. Aunt Julia hoped Archie would reach them that night. She had not seen him in almost four years, and from his rather reserved letters she could hardly judge what changes had taken place. There would be some joy amid the sorrow.

He came in the next morning while they were at breakfast, and asked for Mrs. Carew, sending his card. They let Aunt Julia go out to him alone, and for a long while no one disturbed them.

"I'll try and get in to lunch," announced Bertram. "Give Archie the heartiest welcome from me, until I can deliver it in the first person."

Lyndell had the table reset, for Aunt Julia had scarcely tasted her breakfast. Then she went with the summons.

She had expected to see him changed and careworn. Changed he certainly was, looking older now than his years, with the old merry boyishness gone out of his face, save when he smiled, and then it had more of the sweetness of resolve and resignation. The lines of indecision had developed into lines of determination. There had been a hard fight with the man within, when he had first awakened to the fact that his life must be among those flawed and wrenched out of true proportion, but he resolved his should not be utterly ruined. There had been disappointment in his man's soul, overwhelming

sorrow at having all his ideals rudely swept away ; there had even been hatred when he realized this was a woman's selfish, deliberate scheming, and that she not only had the hardihood to admit it, but was angry now that he should have been won into befriending her.

"If I had not married you, and gone West with mamma!" she flung up to him the third year of her married life. "Mamma has married again very nicely. You see papa's wretched fiasco didn't crush her, and it wouldn't have crushed me. I might have married so much more to my liking. Oh, why did you put the temptation in my way, when you knew I was too weak and frightened to resist it?"

And she had thrown herself upon his boyish magnanimity!

He had given up his profession that he might have a real home. He had conquered anger and disappointment, and taken up his burthen. The child would surely smooth over the rough places, and reunite them in a new bond.

She had tried to turn the child into a subtle temptation. If he had gone to some gay city, but this town was no better than the garrison, not really as entertaining. In a few years he might make a good deal of money, but she wanted her delights now. Her sister's letters filled her with longing and envy.

She said no word of the divorce she had planned. To keep him from following her she appointed various times for her return. Something always happened, and she kept begging for a few weeks longer, until she was ready for her final move. But selfishness conquered at last. She was not fond of children, and the gratification of spite would hardly compensate for the trouble. She would have a better time with her sister, without the child.

CHAPTER XVIII.

TAKING UP BROKEN THREADS.

"MY little girl!"

Archie Stanwood took his child in his arms. He seemed so tall and strong and robust, and he held the little mite in his sheltering clasp, as if he could shut out all other claims, as if the love from her would be his compensation in all the years to come. The great gladness in every line of his face moved Dell to tears. The soft eyes in the dawn of winsome curiosity, the baby smile of sweetness and half surprise, the bright, birdlike voice as she asked: "Is 'ou my papa?" touched him immeasurably.

He sat down with her in his lap. She leaned over and glanced at her playmate of the few days.

"Pearl, I dot a papa—my own papa. I don't want your papa any 'onger," shaking her head gravely.

Pearl ran and climbed on her father's knee in a prideful, imperious fashion.

They all laughed, and the awkwardness was broken.

There was so much to talk about without touching on the misfortunes. Archie's manly dignity put them all at ease. Aunt Jue hovered about him half laughingly, that she might not cry, when her heart was so full. That all this sorrow and trouble had not perverted the boy's nature, or debased that of the man, was a thing to be thankful for, and Mrs. Stanwood poured out a grateful prayer in her heart, while he talked.

He referred but slightly to his wife, as he talked to his cousins. He was not afraid of handsome Violet now. And though he had not the polish of Paul Amory, his military training had given him a certain style and air of authority.

"You have changed wonderfully," he said to Dell, "but the same soul shines through your eyes. I've wanted dozens of times to tell you my story and have your sweet sympathy, but it seemed as if the confidence belonged first to mother. She would have felt hurt if I had, and oh, the story would have broken her heart in its hopelessness! So I just shouldered the punishment of my unwisdom, and cried to no one but that Greater Strength always ready to listen. It *was* a temptation to end it when she offered me the child, but my soldier training helped. I had taken the vow for life, and I had no right to make a false bargain to ease myself. I could not deceive God. Oh, Dell! I can't understand a woman believing that her own will and present gratification is all the God there is. Well, it may be the God of this world. I used to wonder how it would be when baby was growing up—which influence would be the stronger. Baby was away so much,—at the nurse's for more than a year,—but I thought her a loving little thing, and her future cost me many sad moments."

His eyes were suffused with dewy softness.

"She is affectionate; I am afraid she did not have much——" Dell paused, with a bright embarrassed color.

"No, she didn't have much love. And Dell, one horrible thought was she might have as much of her mother's nature—anyone's on that side," with a shudder.

"She has a good deal of Aunt Jue. I see it already."

"She couldn't resemble a better or sweeter woman. I begin to realize how parents may suffer. Well, it is ended for the present. I am so glad she came to you."

"It was simply because I was convenient."

Archie flushed with some shameful recollections. Helena had more than once begged him to importune his rich cousin for money to start in some kind of business.

"Whatever motive it arose from, I am glad to get my baby—no one can tell *how* glad. I shall not have it, to be sure, but I can hear about it frequently, and know that it has a mother's love—my mother's," proudly.

Dr. Carew was as much surprised as anyone at the change from youth to manhood.

"Archie has developed the best that was in him," he said to Dell. "Pain and sorrow and trouble are aids in shaping character, if a man has strength and believes mightily in the other strength promised. And that is why so many fail depending on their own impulses. But one has to be faithful to the end."

Archie and Dr. Carew had never been really intimate friends. Indeed, they had not seen much of each other. But now the keynote had been struck.

Bertram stole a brief while from his precious writing that evening, and carried Archie off to his study.

"The divorce, you know, is not really worth anything," he said. "What steps will you take?"

"None at all," Archie replied, with slow gravity.

"But you are not legally free. At least such freedom——" studying his visitor.

"If you mean—about any future marriage—I should never marry, even if she did. I couldn't. I cannot help now what she will do. I only hope she will not interfere with the child until she is old enough to know and choose

between us, if choice must be made. I can trust her to my mother. If I had known surely this thing would have happened, I should not have left the army."

No one would ever realize just what he had given up.

"You can go back."

"I shall, if my country needs me. But I see a prospect before me to make some money in the next half dozen years. It will be rather lonely living, but I may coax mother out for a visit. She did not use to dislike traveling. I shall feel settled in my mind."

Bertram thought like the others—what if this wife, who had separated herself, should come back some day, when her sister had tired of her, and be meekly repentant, especially if she found her husband had prospered meanwhile? But it was in the present Archie had to live, and wise living would prepare him for the future.

It was such a delight to be with them all after his exile. Even if the choicest entertainments were over, and ultra-fashionables were hurrying to get out of the city, there was a great deal left.

"It's such a rich place! I could find enjoyment forever," Archie said, with hearty pleasure. "And you seem to know such lots of charming people, Dell. What a fascinating man that Mr. Drayton is!"

"Do you think so?" returned Dell. She had never considered him in that light particularly.

"He has fascinated Fanny, I'm sure. She's queer, isn't she? Do you know, I think it is very good of her not to say sharp things about—about the baby's mother." He never said "my wife" in speaking of her. "I do take it as a great kindness. Will you tell her, when I am gone? For I know or understand facts that I was quite ignorant of at that time. I was a great credulous

fellow, trusting everybody. It seems as if it must have been in some other life," laughingly. "Will Bert go out to California?" he asked, a while afterward. "That's a wonderful scheme. If I wasn't tied up in a mine, I'd take my chance with them."

"Oh, not now!" Dell replied.

"Well, you hurry him through that book, or he will be worn out. What a tremendous capacity for work he has! But I think you are both taking life too hard."

"We are trying to earn our holiday," said Dell, with a soft little smile. "And you know before my marriage mine was all holiday."

"If things had been ordained differently, had to be so," looking up smilingly, yet with very earnest eyes—"quarter of a century ago, I should like to have been Bert Carew's brother. I've always wanted an older brother. Not but what I've been loved and cared for more than I deserved, and I wouldn't change mother and father for anyone. Bert and I are to correspond when I go back—though where he will find time to write letters——" mirthfully. "And if I was a free fellow now, I'd study medicine like that young Murray. Dell, don't you ever get jealous of the young men—or the old ones?"

She envied them sometimes, but she would not have confessed it.

The time for parting came. The Amorys were to go with Aunt Julia. Tessy had begged her to bring the baby to Sherburne House. They all agreed that she must have a new name.

Fanny had outstayed her "flying visit," and could find no reasonable excuse for remaining. Besides, Dell was looking tired, and needed a rest.

"You might go down with us," they all urged. "It is

so lovely now, the cream of the year. Won't you send her, doctor?"

"You have grown paler, thinner," said her husband, glancing at her. "Would you like to go?" studying her with a kind of tender indecision in his eyes.

"I do not believe I could on such a short notice."

"We will consider," he said gravely.

She went out into the hall with him. His gloves were down in the office, and with his arm around her, they walked together.

"I ought to send you, really." There was a professional decision in his voice.

"Do you *want* me to go?"

"My child, I don't *want* you out of my sight for a day. I am not much company, I know, but this kind of work isn't going on forever. I have not dared to think of the end. I have found so much more to use than I had in my mind when I began. It isn't like Millicent's stories," with a laugh in his voice, and giving her a fond squeeze. "A month, perhaps."

"Oh, Bertram!" with a little cry of joy.

"My darling, I can never thank you for your patience and forbearance. It has been very hard; I know that. You can't imagine the stress of mind, and a weak or foolish woman would have been a trial to me, I confess. We might go off somewhere for a week or two,—home,—because father is dying to see you. And when proof-reading is finished, we will take the long-delayed wedding tour."

Her face was a gleam of sunshine in its delight.

"Four years in the autumn. Five years since I have had a holiday. I have stuck pretty well to my post, but I have been making my mark."

His ambition glowed in his eyes. She was always proud of him. For his father's sake, she would not have marred a single promise.

"It will be so lonely when they are gone. Is there anyone else to ask?"

"I don't want anyone. I will just be quiet and rest. Yes, I shall wait."

He kissed her, and hurried off.

They were all quite disappointed, but, then, she was sure to come a little later. Both babies had grown very fond of Auntie Dell. But for Aunt Julia, she could not have let Archie's little girl go. She looked like a different child in this brief while.

Dell went with Archie to see them off. His train did not start until several hours later, and he had a sad but comforting time with his cousin. It was like beginning life over again.

There was the kindergarten for the afternoon. She was really glad to do something, although she was so tired. And there were poor mothers with a host of babies, ailing and poverty-stricken. Every year there were more of them. Husbands out of work, sometimes drunken.

That night Bertram was called miles away. A patient who had been ill with a fever, and sent away to the seaside, on the road to recovery, everyone thought, had gone suddenly insane, and scattered death and destruction around.

Why did God allow such terrible things to happen?

Farther back than this, the man had been self-indulgent, tyrannical, with no real regard for the comfort of those around him, further than to supply their wants with his abundant means. No belief in a future, no

conscience beyond his own desires, his only ambition to make money and spend it lavishly. And in a brief moment he had crossed the mysterious line of rationality, and become a demon.

Dr. Carew was deeply interested and intensely shocked at the result that one could hardly have imagined.

He stumbled over Drayton, who was quite at a loss to know what to do with himself. He had spent last evening at the Carews.

"I wish you would go and entertain Mrs. Carew," the doctor said. "A messenger came from the Harrowgates with word of that terrible catastrophe, and by accident she heard it. It was cruel to leave her alone after all the people we have had about. It will be an act of real kindness, and I know she will appreciate it."

"Why, I shall be delighted to. I was afraid I'd made myself a bore of late, so I thought I would swing back to the other side, of severe propriety," Drayton replied.

"Now, if you are too tired,—and you do look exhausted,—and do not want to be bothered with anyone, will you frankly say so?" he remarked to Mrs. Carew, half an hour later. "The doctor was nervous about you, I could see that. But, sometimes solitude is preferable. And we are too old friends to be afraid of the truth with each other."

"I am glad to see you. It was shocking, was it not? Yes," with a kind of nervous shiver, "I hardly knew what to do with myself. It is so long since I have been alone."

"And you have had so many excitements. The doctor will have to take you for his next patient, if you are not careful."

"I am going to be very careful. He has enough on his hands. After he is through——" Lyndell's voice fell a little.

Drayton laughed with softened doubtfulness.

"Will he get through? He is like a man in a mine, who goes on discovering veins of gold, we will say, that must be worked to yield anything. Some do not; then he has to retrace his steps. Others branch out, and lure him hither and thither. The world is very rich—how rich I do not think I ever realized until this winter. And to a man to whom work is fascinating, the richness seems attainable. But can a man do or take more than his own share without defrauding someone? There, I am not going to bother your brain with my speculations. You must have a rest. Let me see," glancing around. "You must take this soft, tempting chair, and have a footstool and cushions. Now, are you comfortable?"

"Delightfully so. But I am interested in what you were saying. How can one's discoveries or experiences defraud another, who may not even think of them?"

Reese Drayton had not been considering the intellectual point, yet he was glad she took it up so readily. He was thinking instead, if this girl had been free when he first saw her, and he had been the kind of man to win her, which he surely was not then, how he should have devoted his whole life to her, every day and every hour. The old world of sin and suffering, poverty, and crime, might have gone by. It would have been her and himself. Up to that date he had put himself first. And this man who had drawn the prize had a hundred other things to occupy his mind. Was she only one of many sources of interest?

He felt the flush like a hot south wind go over his face.

"I was talking nonsense. You have found out by this time that intellect is not my strong point. Now, I wonder which would be the most soothing, reading or music? There's that beautiful nocturne of Mendelssohn, from 'Midsummer Night's Dream.' I can't play like Mrs. Osborne, and I dare say I have forgotten parts."

"The music is there," Dell interposed.

"I don't want the music. I am not playing for an audience; just a rest when the day is done. You have enough in yours for any two days."

"Oh," with a soft sound that indicated rather than gave a laugh, "some of it has ended. Society is mostly over; the clubs have darkened their friendly portals; some of the winter's charities are done with, and I have transferred my hospital work to fresher hands. I found I was going beyond my strength."

If he had been Dr. Carew she should have stopped it long ago—never begun so much, in fact. He longed to say this, but he had no right under cover of friendship, so he replied quietly:

"I am very glad."

She was quite a distance from the piano, and his back was toward her. He touched the keys softly and made a twilight of music in the apartment. There were places he skipped, there were exquisite strains he played over twice. Then he wandered into other things that were half remembered.

"You are not compelled to listen," he said presently. "So long as you do not think and plan for to-morrow, it will be enough."

"I am not planning. Why, you could be quite tyrannical." Her voice was too measured to offend.

"Yes. What were the thoughts? If they were heavier than a feather's weight, dismiss them."

"Then I should have to be feather-brained."

"That would be sufficient to listen to my melody going astray," he made answer lightly.

"Where is your violin?"

"At my room. I have not touched it in ages. It did well enough out there, but here it smacks of the professional."

"Do you mean to go out to California?"

"I knew the mention of the violin would recall that. Yes; I am going out. I wish I could find a fellow like your cousin Stanwood. I sounded him, but he seems to think he had better keep at the one thing, since it promises success."

She drew a long breath. "Oh, I wish he might have done so! He would be such a great help—— I do want to hear about Gifford," she entreated.

"There is so little to tell. He has been ill in a hospital, and is in good hands. An acquaintance of mine, a physician, has been looking after him. If it *is* possible, he will persuade him to go back to the Osbornes."

"Oh, I hope it may be! You have taken so much trouble, although you have made light of it. May I not write to the Osbornes about it. Do they know?"

"Yes, everything," he answered briefly. "I meant to wait, but you may sleep the better for hearing it. Bevis Osborne will go up and see him. Do not build too much on it. There, it is ten. I have done my duty by Dr. Carew," rising. "And you must go to bed. Good-night!"

"You have given me the best of anodynes." Her eyes thanked him.

Yet, she sat there a long while. If she was dreaming, she could hardly tell. She was soothed and tranquilized, strangely so. Floating memories shadowed her brain lightly, like a drift across a summer sky. Ben was going through and locking up the house. She heard the maids' voices as they ascended the stairs. The atmosphere still seemed full of delicious music. Then her brain listened again to the sweet, sad Spanish lovers, her eyes looked out on the lovely gardens of the West, and she was Dell Sherburne.

Dr. Carew might have scolded if he had known she sat there dreaming until after midnight. He did not reach home until a late breakfast time. The papers were full of the tragedy.

"Don't read any of it," he entreated. "It is too horrible. Yet it did not surprise me so much. A man who never controlled his temper, who flew out at his family on the slightest provocation, was hardly likely to be mild-mannered in a moment of delirium. The puzzle is when tender, devoted natures go so astray."

Dell was looking quite bright and rested, as she poured his coffee. Just they two. She was longing for him to play the lover again, but she was too proud to entreat, too sensible to encroach upon his precious time.

"Did Drayton come last evening? I begged him to."

"Yes. I was glad not to be alone."

"I am making him useful in various ways, planning his conversion."

"I am glad you like him." Should she tell him now how earnest Drayton had been about Gifford, how successful?

"I thought him a charming aggregation of worldliness

at first, the sort of potent personality that gathers the sunshine around himself without minding his poor neighbor in the shade. He is lavishly generous in money, but that costs him nothing. What he wants is the sense of responsibility every human being with great gifts ought to feel, and the conscientiousness to put it into practice. If he were religious he would make a clergyman. There is a philanthropical side to him, only he hasn't a bit of discrimination. I want to keep a little hold of him until I am more at leisure."

Lyndell laughed brightly. "Millicent said you had a superior capacity for setting people at work and bringing out the best in them. Why do you not bring out the best in me?"

"I think my father took it out of my hands. Dell, you are quite an evenly balanced person. There are a great many things you can do well."

"Which means mediocrity. I have always coveted a splendid genius, and have none." There was a longing in her voice.

"That is underrating yourself. You have had a great influence on all the Sherburne household. Your genius *is* influence," and he smiled tenderly over to her, "personal influence."

"And yet I am not a magnetic person."

"I am glad you are not. It is a dangerous gift. No, I think it is your earnest, generous manner of living, your willingness to give, your desire to see people happy. I could talk to you an hour, but the office people have been waiting. I had to have some breakfast," with a boyish half entreaty, as if excusing himself.

"And you had no sleep last night."

"A nap in the train this morning. Don't fret your

tender soul. Take a long drive in the Park. It is just magnificent."

"And we used to go together," with a regretful cadence.

"We will again, presently. You drop to languor too easily. Father would say I didn't take good care of you."

But he remembered to send a coupé for her. She called for a friend, who had gone out of town. She did not want anyone to gossip, or to stir her with abstruse questioning. So many of the women she met were restless and strenuous, always wanting something new, or dressing up the old facts with the modern fashions of thought. Were there not fashions in thought? Last winter had been different from this. The recent methods seemed to be an effort to eliminate the old faith in God, and put human will in its place. She had been confused with all the bright reasoning.

This morning, out here in the glorious sunshine and fragrant air, one had to believe in a Supreme Creator. In the busy bricked-in streets one could not see his handiwork so plainly, and there was the work of man in the hurrying throng, the business and prosperity, the pinched and scowling faces, the scanty garments drawn about some wasted form. But out here the children were playing and laughing, the mothers talking, some of them with a bit of sewing in their hard-worked, roughened hands, finding the leisure that never seemed to come in the stifling tenement with the meals and housework. A few of the younger women reading, a number sitting listlessly, drinking in the airs of heaven, free out here. Ought she not to pick up one of them, and add to her content!

Someone came down the steps of the Museum and bowed, raising his hand with a pleased gesture. Mrs. Carew halted, and Mr. Drayton came out to the coupé.

"Do I look frightfully cross?" he asked, with a smile. "I have been waiting one mortal hour for an acquaintance who insisted we should view some of the curiosities together. Did you rest well last night? You look improved."

"This morning would improve anyone who had not reached the last point," she returned spiritedly.

"The doctor came home?"

"This morning," nodding with a pretty grace.

"You had better take him in hand. What is there, something about having a giant's strength, and not turning it upon himself?"

"You misquote horribly," laughing with a gay sound. "Whither now?"

"Nowhere. Of all people to be pitied, the idle man needs commiseration the most—the idle man who has been roused to an uneasy sense that he might have been put in the world for some purpose, hidden from the ordinary sight, but revealed to the wise. The last adjective stands for Dr. Carew. My engagement up here this morning was purely beneficent, and resultless."

"Shall I take pity on you? I am bidden to be out all the morning. I made one benevolent attempt, but was frustrated. We can condole with each other."

He accepted the graceful gesture of the hand that implied invitation. They went slowly through the most romantic ways, and talked a little about the old summer on the other side of the continent; of places abroad they had both seen. There were so many subjects of interest. She kept revolving the suggestions Bertram

had made about him. Had she really any power to rouse him? Would it not be worth doing? There was a sincerity and openness in her desire that made it seem free from the slightest danger to either of them. She would have been shocked at the thought of any influence coming between her and her husband, and Drayton held her more sacred than that summer of her engagement.

They came around to some of the doctor's purposes presently.

"There is one thing he has his heart set upon, and I've offered him the place and the start. A home for inebriates—not the low down ones, or those who have lost all hope and ambition and have not the will to make an effort. Some of these others are husbands, fathers, and have a longing for clean, wholesome lives. I know it is commonly said that it makes a stronger man to have him stay and face temptation, but it is better for some people to be out of it until they gain a little strength. And in an overcrowded city like this there is so limited a chance for them."

"And you have such a strong feeling against intemperance. It is very good of you." There was a little tremble in her voice.

"Oh, I am not going to do anything, really. I shall go out and look at the place. The old mission, the mountain ridge and the forest I want to keep. But there is a long stretch at the other end. The doctor knows of someone who can manage the first part of it—a city missionary out of health from overwork, and who will be glad to spend several years there."

"How much you have planned already!"

"The doctor has. I don't know how he can keep his ideas disentangled, and give each its due. I have seen

this Mr. Moore, and like his intelligent common sense. It is not a real charity scheme, you must know, but a philanthropical experiment. And though it won't have quite the advantages and the backing Grandon Park had, there is no reason why it should not be a success. And when you see the hundreds of poor wretches here, if a few can be kept from going the same way it will be a gain."

"Oh, I know of some who would gladly go. I wish you would take me into your plans," she cried eagerly.

"There has been so little of it yet, just mere speculation, thinking what might be done. At first I offered him the land banteringly, a week or so ago, and I am afraid now he will work me up in it some way. I shouldn't love to work. I'm getting settled and shall presently reach middle life."

He made an amusing gesture of disinclination.

"I think we have no right to say that, or to evade the real purposes of our creation."

"You are all so strenuous."

She smiled, thinking of her husband's comment. She did not mind now Drayton's pleasant half ironies, his doubts and questionings. For if there had not been something worth rousing, would not Bertram speedily have touched shallows and quicksands?

"Yes," he began, after a long pause. It had seemed a golden moment to her, and yet she had not quite the right setting for her message. The fine instinct that was part of her nature shrank from stirring too deeply among the secret impulses and vague desires of this man. It was as if she might touch a wrong note, though she did not comprehend that the very accord might make a dissonance in the harmony of both lives.

"Yes, you are all right." There was an instant's gleam of knowledge that irradiated his whole countenance, gave it the uplifted light she had caught occasionally in his playing. "It *is* a shame for a man of average abilities, and more than his share of this world's goods,—that have come to him without any effort of his own,—not to do something better than cumber the ground. Even if there were no other life, the great cause of humanity ought to stir me—shall stir me," with a ring of determination to his voice that electrified her.

"If there were no other life, in spite of all the altruism the noblest have preached, we should be saying—'Soul, take thine ease. Eat, drink, and enjoy,'" Lyndell replied. "We can never quite dispossess ourselves of the hope or the fear of the future life, until we have thrown off all moral restraint. And how much does the man who has reached this point care for his neighbor?"

"If the practice of religion came up to the theory, it would convert the world;" in a tentative manner.

She smiled a little. "Does the theory of pure humanity, materialism, convert, uplift more than the few? Is it the religion for the masses? Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, is only the second part of the great commandment. It could not have been written without the first part."

"I shall put myself into the doctor's hands and yours;" smiling vaguely and keeping his face turned a little away, as if there might be some sort of protest. "He is clear-sighted, he has a wide range, and, what is unusual with enthusiasts, good common sense. I must try to cultivate the latter."

The streets began to fill up with people going home.

"What a short morning!" she declared, with a buoy-

ancy in her voice and freshness in her face. "I have obeyed the doctor's prescription," laughingly. "I shall have been out all the morning to the detriment of other matters."

"When I can help you in anything, command me," he exclaimed gravely, as they were set down at her home. "Good-morning! Thank you for a delightful time. Do not throw me up as unpromising if I do need a good deal of training."

There was a slow, significant smile that meant, to her, the friendship with her husband would only draw him closer. He did not want to translate it to any meaning, nor acknowledge to himself that he wanted an impossible meaning.

The sun had grown warm. The cool house gave her a shiver as she entered it. The loneliness suddenly oppressed her. She wanted children's voices in it, the gift withheld. She wanted some warm vital presence, for now her duties seemed like cold abstractions, put in the place of real things that should be. Did every married life come to know such spaces, when people simply went on and waited, when there was a quiet sort of confusion, as if something was being re-arranged?

Growing out of the old things, maybe. Ideas ripening, harvested, and new ones springing up in the soil of the brain.

CHAPTER XIX.

IN THE TWILIGHT.

WHAT a long, long afternoon it was! She took a book and dropped down on the luxurious couch, Bertram's extravagance it had been to her on her birthday. But she could not get interested in the story, and she had not the brains for Ruskin; she wanted to be soothed, rather than stirred.

What were they doing at Sherburne House? The baby out on the porch in his bassinet—there were two boys now. Ned and his little sister, tumbling about on the soft grass; Tessy indoors and out, living in the center and radiating an atmosphere where the tender levels were always within reach. Two cheerful old ladies, Milly and Aunt Beaumanoir, little Nora, who would be the big girl of the cousins presently.

What was she missing out of her life?

The season grew warmer. There was hurrying to Europe, an exodus to the seasides, and country houses, and mountains. There were homes for working girls' vacations to be settled with matrons and assistants. The outings for babies and sick children, the many channels of beneficence that run through a great city like arteries, to be taken up by one and another, lest the real life blood of them should be wasted.

The people who were not hurrying off were quite worth studying, Mr. Drayton found. Brave, sweet, self-deny-

ing women, some of them with but little money to give, and giving so nobly of themselves. And he learned too, that all sin and wrong-doing was not of choice, that poor souls dropped into the abyss when there was no hand stretched out to help them struggle to the farther shore and safety. He made little journeys about with Lawrence Murray, where Dell was not allowed to go. They were always talking of the doctor and his wife.

There was Mrs. Murray's pretty home-nest with sweet, shy Densie, who was not like either of the girls. Curiously enough, Drayton came to hear a good deal of Dell's early story, even to the famous running away.

"I was so homesick," Dell said in extenuation; but she was too tender and generous to lay the fault anywhere save on circumstances. For surely Aunt Aurelia's later love had redeemed all.

She was very bright and happy, though sometimes the long drain reasserted itself and languor would set in.

"You are not fit to go out this morning," Reese Drayton would say, with a glance at her. "Give me your list of people to be looked after. I will be sure to report the unmanageable ones."

"How good you are!" with a smile that repaid him.

There were evenings of music and reading, restful for her, pleasureable withal. She sometimes dreamed of her first happy year, when her husband had time for her, before the book that was to add to his growing fame had been really begun, except in the way of casual notes. Drayton rarely stayed to lunch,—some fine instinct prevented,—but he felt quite free to accept the dinner invitations. Occasionally the doctor did not come in until quite late, and they two sat alone, chatting over a wide range of subjects.

Was there any danger in it? Not to her, he said decisively. She was not longing for amusement; her frank, upright, truthful nature would never swerve from the line of duty. Besides, she was hedged about by love. Dr. Carew was very fond of her. But a man with such a wife ought to be able to devote more time to her. They were both missing so much of the sweetness out of life.

There were moments when he sat quiet and dreamed. If this had been his lot! If he could have drawn this prize! Ah, he should even grudge the summer zephyrs that played about her brow and disturbed the soft tendrils of hair. No winter wind would have a chance to visit her roughly. She should not waste her smiles and her tender words on those poor wretches whose slow, brutish souls could not apprehend the fineness of hers; who might appreciate her gifts, but not herself. He had yet to learn that this was the highest charity, that if ever they were to be raised it was by the earnest, noble souls going down among them.

How could he endure the months away from her? Why should he go out with the Amorys? Why not wait until—well, weeks hence, when *they* were to go on their holiday? Would there not always be some work to keep a man who had thrown himself heart and soul into such an engrossing profession? She had given Dr. Carew a girl's unreasoning love. If she were to choose now——

"I am glad you do not require positive entertainment," she said softly one evening, and he could feel the smile in her voice. Could Dr. Carew, with all his knowledge, find it?

"There are times when negative entertainment may

satisfy. Who is it says you never reach the perfection of friendship until you can share silence as well as conversation?"

"It is restful to have friends with whom you do not need to make an effort. I think I have grown——" She hesitated, with a touch of mirth in her voice.

"Do not say stupid, that would be a cruel apology. If I thought you were compelled to entertain me, I should stay away. But one gets tired of roaming around, and the bright spirits at the club have gone yachting and hunting and mountain-climbing, or flirting in country houses. You are very good to tolerate me. Have you heard from your cousins?"

"About the journey? I think they have found home so charming that they hate to start anew. You ought to go down——"

She realized suddenly how lonely these weeks would have been, but she added bravely:

"Virginia is at its loveliest. I want you to see Sherburne House, and Beaumanoir. The quaint old town Ardmore, that takes you back—not quite as far as ancient Monterey, perhaps, but which has an antiquity and individuality of its own."

He wondered a little when *they* were going. Mr. and Mrs. Amory had sent him a cordial invitation, and he had a desire to see the Mrs. von Lindorm they all talked so much about. How would Miss Beaumanoir appear in her own home?

"I must see it," he replied, rousing himself again. What a trick he had of lapsing off into dreams!

He had not trusted himself to say much about their joining the California party, it really was too near his heart. If he could persuade the doctor! For she was

so unconscious of—— There really was no name to give his interest, only that vague "might have been." When he disturbed that serenity, the charm would be rudely broken.

But another touch was to jar the discord of an awakening.

They were looking over the mail one morning.

"Oh," declared Bertram, "I had quite forgotten! Did we accept for Mrs. Seabury's evening? She leaves the city on Saturday."

"Why, yes. You desired me to. That famous German professor is to be there. You really asked to see him."

"So I did. I wanted a tilt with him to get out some of his ideas. But how I am to put it in——"

There was an entreaty in his glance, as if she might manage it for him.

"Mrs. Seabury has been such a generous coadjutor. And I do want to see this German savant. But it will be so late before I am at liberty;" and a slight frown crossed his face. "If I could be a dozen people and have *one* for myself;" and he gave a short, half sighing laugh.

"Then you cannot go?" She felt rather relieved.

"Oh, I must compass it. Suppose Drayton takes you—well, not very early, if you are tired, and that will stretch out the time, and make my lateness the less noticeable. There are so few men about in society that an attractive one will cover a multitude of shortcomings on my part. Yes, that will answer. After accepting, we couldn't be so rude to a really delightful friend, and one of my most faithful workers. That is about the last society obligation, is it not? At all events we will not

accept any more. I will send to Drayton. And, about dinner—don't wait for me if I am late."

The engagement had almost slipped out of her mind, yet she would have recalled it in looking over her list. Mrs. Seabury had been such a ready friend in more than one stress, so cheerful and inspiring when matters were inclined to go wrong ; a woman with a kindly heart and generous hand, discriminating withal, and assuming a sort of motherly interest in the doctor, by right of age and many more years of experience.

She had meant to take a good rest in the afternoon, but there were several interruptions. Mr. Drayton came in to dinner when she was fain to be alone. But he brought her such cheering news from Gifford. He had been very ill indeed, and barely pulled through. At the worst, when they had given up hope, Mr. Osborne had been sent for and came, forgetting the bitter passage between them. And as soon as it was safe to move him they were going to take him back to the ranch.

"Someone did all this." The low, questioning voice endowed her words with a peculiar significance. "It was not done for love of a stranger, perhaps not all pity for suffering."

She was just realizing what she had been willing to accept without a question. Her delicate sense took a sudden alarm.

"Never give yourself an anxious thought about it," he began eagerly. "How and where he was found is his secret, and if he wishes to blot it out forever, no one else has a right to it. But when he was found—I had an acquaintance who went to his rescue, a man I had once befriended, who nursed him through his illness. As for the rest——" He hated to talk this over with a woman,

and that woman Lyndell Carew, but his manliness came to his aid in the emergency.

"I dare say you are conjuring up money obligations, as women of your delicacy and honor are apt to do," Drayton added, after a pause. "Osborne will discharge those. And he will give the poor fellow another chance, never fear."

Her whole soul was moved in gratitude. It shone tenderly in her face, like the blossoming of a flower. She raised her beautiful eyes, and for an instant Reese Drayton coveted that other light which was not gratitude. But this was the true, sweet nature shining through in all its innocent bravery—all he would ever have a right to, let him remember that.

"There are no words to thank you," she said, with exquisite grace. "I cannot try;" and her voice sank to a moving cadence.

An indefinable half-consciousness embarrassed him for a moment.

"After all," he began, when he recovered his mental poise, "it is no more than Dr. Carew is doing for many a one. He does not simply medicine bodies, but he works eagerly to save souls, to set aright lives that have been warped and twisted out of their first semblance. I think a man could not know him and not be stirred by his care of and interest in humanity. I am a sad idler beside him. So do not rate my little effort too highly, even if it was done for your sake and that of the Osbornes. You know we have become famous friends."

It was sweet to hear her husband praised. Her eyes shone now with an exalted tenderness. Friendship held a deeper meaning for her. There were a work and a duty in it, not merely pleasant association. Had she always

done him justice? She had been baffled by his inconsistencies, but were they not a sort of outside husk to the man?

She knew she should hear the story from Alice, and she would not tease Drayton's evident disinclination to make a hero of himself. She admired his modesty in the matter, and was satisfied to convince him of her gratitude, though it was not likely he would ever know all her reasons and strenuous endeavors for her cousin's salvation.

They lingered over the dessert. Afterward they had a little music, interspersed with bits of enthusiasm about favorite passages and composers. Then she excused herself, though she hated to break the pleasant spell.

"It is an absolute duty," she declared, half in apology. "It is too warm for any effort. But I have only to go as a promise of better things to come. I am glad not to be intellectual this evening, but just play the part of listener. I believe a winter, with its exigent demands, does drain one. I feel as if I had reached the end of my limited resources."

She was less brilliant, more ethereal, with a kind of womanly languor that gave a touch of tenderness. She was fascinating in this mood, he thought.

He paced the drawing room softly. How she lingered over her toilet! Every day ran away so fast, except those on which he did not see her—rare now. But there would be an end of them, unless he could persuade the doctor to go to California. Drayton had more than half promised to accompany the party, and they were to start in ten days or so. If they could take Mrs. Carew, and the doctor join them later on! It was a fascinating thought, and he held it for a moment, but he knew she would not go, and strange inconsistency, he

approved of what he knew beforehand would be her decision. No friend had any right to come so near, but he should like to have the next nearest place that a friend might honorably take.

She came down presently, in some soft fabric that wrapped her about like a cloud and had flowing lines and lace garniture. It was a curious, vague tint of primrose color, and it gave her an exquisite coolness, an inapproachableness—he could think of no other word to apply to her.

"Oh," exclaimed Mrs. Seabury, as they entered, "I began to think you were not coming. But the doctor?" in a disappointed inquiry.

"We were to bring his regrets for the present, and his promise to appear later on," said Mrs. Carew, in a delicate half apology.

"That is extremely good of you. Professor Heimsdorf has been twice promised the pleasure of meeting Dr. Carew—to be disappointed. He sails for home early next week, and I relied upon the doctor's word, though I know he is extremely busy. I believe his book is no longer a secret."

The charming smile of gratification pleased Dell. She was more than glad her husband was not to disappoint his friend.

There was not a large company. Mrs. Seabury had just enough variety to make entertainment a pleasure to her guests. There was some delightful music, two or three questions rather indolently discussed, seaside places and summer dissipations touched upon by some with pleasant gracefulness.

It was quite as if Mr. Drayton felt himself in a curious way responsible for Dr. Carew's partial defection. He

made himself very agreeable, brought out some of his best, and it was of a fine quality when he chose. Lyndell was interested and proud of him, as she would have been of one of her cousins. She liked, too, that he should not devote himself exclusively to her. She watched him as she chatted with old Mr. Romaine, who prosed a little about the city as he recalled it in his earlier days.

Professor Heimsdorf was late. A fine, fair, ruddy German, looking more like a prince than a scientist, as one might imagine either. A little group of the more intellectual and traveled ladies circled about him, breaking the other combinations in a pretty manner.

Lyndell was sitting by the open window that looked out on an inclosed place used as a conservatory in the winter. There were a few palms standing around. The sashes were pushed aside, and some trailing vines from the yard below scattered a delicate fragrance. One tree at the back of the small yard added a picturesque effect in the starlight, hiding the fence, and breaking the rear of the house opposite.

"Are you warm?" asked Drayton, coming around to her side. She was fanning herself slowly. "And tired, I suppose. It is after ten, and the doctor will soon be here. Oh, I had his positive promise," with a nod and indication of a smile. "He keeps his word, when it is positively given."

"Yes," with soft approval.

"Come and walk about a bit. It will rest you."

They took a turn up and down the room.

"You must be introduced to the professor," exclaimed Mrs. Seabury, with animation.

"Oh, not now." He was repeating some poetry from

Schiller in a fine, sonorous voice. "We must not interrupt that."

Then they went down again, out into the ante-room. The soft wind played through the vines and showered her with fragrance as she leaned against the pillar. Two figures were moving in the yard below, almost a story beneath them. Every moment the air grew cooler. It was enchanting out here, away from the lights, in this soft greenery.

Neither of them said anything. She was enjoying the restfulness. A little ray of light, coming from somewhere, outlined her face, proud and sweet.

The two women had sauntered up, and were standing about underneath them.

"Frank Curtis was his sponsor, I believe." The wind brought the voice up to them in its low distinctness. "There's no end to his money, and he spends it lavishly, gives it away like a prince. He subscribed a hundred dollars to the fund for the sick babies' outing—one of her pet charities. I thought that cousin, Miss Beaumanoir, would capture him. He was very devoted. Or was his devotion to Mrs. Carew? He haunts the house like a shadow, and is going everywhere with her. She's a rather striking woman, but isn't this pure intellect business something of a humbug, a cloak——"

Drayton's strong arm was about her, turning her suddenly, leading her to the end of the porch. She was deadly pale, and her eyes were full of terrified appealing light.

"Do not mind that idle gossip." His tone was soft, nervous, caressing, as one might comfort a child. He pressed her cold hands. She looked as if she would faint. She tried to speak, but her very lips refused to

utter a sound, and the terror in her face deepened as she caught the light in his eyes, the surprised gleam he did not realize was there.

"I am your husband's friend, and yours," he said proudly. "And, what will you think if I tell you I have seriously considered Fanny Beaumanoir—that I may, some day, be your cousin——"

"Oh!" It was a pathetic cry of disapproval. She would have given worlds to recall it the instant it was uttered. But that this man should throw away what might be the development of a fine, true life in a spasm of manly tenderness and regard for her——

"Yes, Mistress Gossip may guess nearer than she thinks, in her ill-bred comments," he resumed haughtily, yet with a secret, overwhelming joy that he had much ado to keep out of his voice.

Lyndell had drawn her hands away. She sat on the top step of the stoop, leaning against the brick wall, shivering with deadly cold, although the night was so warm. Her brain was in a slow, dull confusion; it seemed as if she must swoon; yet she made what effort she could against it.

"Oh, what can I do!" He bent over her in deepest solicitude. If he had the right to take her in his arms and comfort her! She was safe in the love for her husband—he gave thanks for that now. And there had never been a clasp of the hand that Dr. Carew might not have seen, no words he might not have listened to.

There was a stir in the hall, a sound of welcome. For once Lyndell Carew was deaf to her husband's voice, that always had an inspiriting cadence, that uplifted her in moments of depression. She seemed in some far world, chained hand and foot.

"Dr. Carew has come." There was a penetrating significance in Drayton's tone. She glanced helplessly; she made a faint movement, as if asking shelter, protection.

He raised her, assisted her a few steps forward, to a wicker chair. Oh, could she go in and face the guests—face the one who had sneeringly said, "a cloak"—what else she did not know? It stung her cruelly.

"Can you come over here by the window?" The guests were clustering to the front end of the long drawing room. He saw the two figures moving in the yard, coming toward the steps. For once he did not want to be found here alone with her, to point any comment. "Now I will see what I can get for a restorative."

She could not brave these chattering women alone. "No, I will go in. You said—Dr. Carew——" Her voice had a faint, wandering sound, but she summoned all her resolution and entered the drawing room, dropping into a chair.

"I will sit here," she exclaimed. "No, do not disturb the doctor, nor anyone. I was a little faint; I shall be better in a moment."

Drayton joined the group at the farther end of the room, but stood so that he could see her. She leaned her head against the high back of the chair and waved her fan slowly. The hum of voices seemed far off; she could not distinguish her husband's tone, though she listened with the intensity of strained nerves. The room moved slowly and went farther off; there was heaviness in the air, from the lights and flowers, that had both been arranged with a careful, sparing hand. She would not call for help—she would be over the faintness in a moment; but now her fan dropped from her nerveless hand.

"Where is Mrs. Carew?" Mrs. Seabury asked, in the lowest of tones.

"She felt weary, and is over by the window in the cooler air," Drayton answered.

"She must hear this. She is so proud of the doctor—we all are;" and Mrs. Seabury glided down the long room, alarmed, as she saw the pallid face.

"My dear Mrs. Carew——" Then she beckoned to Drayton, whose eyes had followed her, but someone came in the doorway.

"Help me take Mrs. Carew out in the air. She seems faint."

They led her back again to the porch, and put her in the chair she had so lately left. She was not quite unconscious. One of the ladies fanned her. Mrs. Seabury dispatched a maid for her viniagrette. The eyes that had drooped so heavily, opened wide, with a dull, wondering stare, and she essayed a question, but her lips moved in silence.

"You were faint," explained Mrs. Seabury. "Though I think you did not faint quite away;" with a reassuring smile.

"I never do faint." Her voice was weak and tremulous. "I have not been as strong lately, I think——"

"And the room was warm. Do you feel quite recovered? The doctor is here, and the professor has taken him up about some article. *Can* you come and listen?"

Mrs. Seabury's thin, intellectual face was all alight.

"Thanks for the solicitude. No; I should be better off here. But do not let me keep you."

"I will remain with her," proffered Mrs. Lorimer. "My brain gets confused on these sociological problems, so I shall lose nothing."

"You are quite willing to spare me?"

"Oh, yes! You must not lose any more of the talk," Lyndell answered softly.

"Now we can be as stupid as we like," began Mrs. Lorimer laughingly. "I should be dead if I kept on such a strain as the higher women do. I tell Mr. Lorimer that I am at my best estate amusing the children. They and their devoted aunt have gone to Long Island, or I dare say I shouldn't be here to-night. And you have so much of the doctor, that I suppose a rest now and then is not altogether distressing! The professor looks as if he would be at home playing on a violoncello. Yet I doubt if he is musical, so his face is a delusive problem. But he recites magnificently. Shall I tire you by talking?"

"Oh, no!" She felt more at ease listening, than confronting her own silence, peopled by strange ghosts. She was hurt, too, though she fought against it in a weak, passive way, with the vague consciousness that she was no longer first with her husband, and not even his inspiration, as he had often said.

Bertram had just grasped his friend's hand and asked in a rather startled tone if he had not brought Mrs. Carew.

"Yes. She found the room warm and is out on the porch;" in a quiet manner.

He would have gone to her, but a group of guests inclosed him. Here was the professor. And in a few moments he was engrossed in an exciting subject. Drayton watched the eager, intellectual face, the strong, fine, and forcible thought that measured an adversary in some things and combated him, and met him in frank agreement on other points. There was a certain breadth in his arguments, a cordiality in his manner, that disarmed if it could not always persuade.

But his heart was hot and angry for the woman on the porch who had the best right to the doctor's interest, who demanded his tenderness and sympathy. He could not follow the argument for thinking of her. Two hours ago he would have gone to her; he could not now. He had tasted of the bitter fruit of knowledge that had ripened unaware, and he must turn it into good, not evil. Was that the old allegory of a lost Eden—the tempting of another?

It was enough to inspire one to see these earnest faces and kindling eyes. Carew could have talked hours, catching up the German's weak points, or elaborating some fine idea with his own thoughts. But the century old clock in the hall told off its hours in a measured strain. They must not trespass on the patience of the guest.

"Come to my office and finish," he said, with fervid interest. "I will make myself at liberty to-morrow evening. I am so sorry we have not met sooner. But I know Mrs. Carew must be waiting for me to take her home;" glancing around in a surprised manner. "Oh—did you say out on the porch?" to Mrs. Seabury.

He went thither in a curiously exultant mood, but when he saw Dell's tired face he was conscience-stricken.

"We must go at once—you look exhausted. How could I have forgotten you! But it was such a splendid talk. My poor darling!" and the sweetness of his voice was like music to her weary soul. The tender clasp was her sure support.

CHAPTER XX.

IN THE DESERT.

THE distance was not great, and she said she would walk. There were several guests going in the same direction. Drayton uttered a brief good-night, and hailed a car. Lyndell leaned heavily on her husband's arm, and he noted her languid step. He almost carried her up the stoop, opened the door with his key, and turned up the burner in a flare. What did the piteous look in her face mean? The next instant she had fainted away in his arms.

He bore her upstairs and laid her on her own bed. He was as gentle and as ready in all ministrations as a woman, and as soon as he had her free from the gauds of fashion he began applying restoratives vigorously. The eyes had a sunken look that smote him. Were the cheeks a little strained and hollow, and the beautiful round, white throat showing lines of thinness he had never noted before? She *had* complained a little, he remembered. She had tired more easily than usual, and he had bidden her rest, and he was meaning to look after her presently. He wished now he had sent her to Sherburne, to his father—then he kissed the waxen cheek with an overwhelming rush of tenderness. He had never known her to faint before.

She drew a long sighing breath presently, and opened her eyes. The warm kisses were on lip and cheek and

brow, and they were like rain to the thirsty land. What had happened? Had some dreadful abyss opened before her. Dell caught her husband's arm and glanced up wildly.

"My darling," soothingly, caressingly.

"Oh, Bertram—there was something——" in a wandering tone. "I must tell you——"

"You shall not tell me anything. Your breath is almost gone again, and your pulse is nothing. I am your physician now, dear. You are to keep quiet and not waste your strength. I must prepare you a composing draught, and then I shall sit here and watch you."

She was glad to be absolved from any exertion. He shaded the lamp so that she should be in darkness, while he laid his papers on the table in the little ray of light, and used his pencil that there might be no sound.

But he was nervous as well. He leaned over the bed frequently, softly touching the wrist, and kissing the brow that was curiously cold. She moved now and then, uneasily, and murmured broken sentences. He caught Aunt Aurelia's name; then she was pleading with someone who seemed to have disappointed her. After a while she grew quiet, but her pulse gained rapidly. By daylight there was considerable fever.

What should he do? A nurse, of course—he would send for one immediately. His father,—or Aunt Neale,—oh, Millicent would be the right person! She was so calm and steady, so comforting. Dell couldn't be really ill! He had let her work too much, go about too much, and there had been so many excitements. Yes, Millicent's sweetness and tranquillity would restore the equilibrium; and the utter quiet he would prescribe would bring rest to both body and mind.

At ten the nurse was there, and the telegram, cautiously worded, had gone to Millicent. The sort of half-stupor was a little puzzling in such a patient. The fever was not high, nor critical, at present. No, he would not believe anything ill could happen to his darling.

"A case of nervous prostration," said the nurse, when Dr. Carew came in at noon.

"A good deal of physical prostration. I can hardly understand how she could have gone down so rapidly."

"Had she been ill before?"

"Never since childhood. She had a violent fever then. My father brought her through. And the skill of to-day cannot be less than that of ten years ago. No, it is not serious, and we shall move heaven and earth to keep it from becoming so."

He would not for a moment admit to himself that she could drift to the verge of danger. There was nothing beyond the little fever and the crushing weakness everywhere, that quietness and rest could soothe and medicine. How could he go away from her? She lay calm and strangely beautiful, lapsing into a state akin to sleep, and then lying wide-eyed and indifferent to all about her. He was too truly wise to seek to excite her, even by loving endearments. Yet it seemed terrible in its strangeness, to see her in this state of awesome quiet. With less knowledge and experience, his love could not have endured it patiently.

But all else suddenly lost its flavor. He had to compel his interest in the cases that demanded his attention. And the final chapter in his book, the grand summing up, seemed dry and tedious. Professor Heimsdorf's call could hardly rouse the interest and enthusiasm of last evening, and he was not sorry to bid him adieu. Then

he went to his wife's room, and dismissed the nurse for the night.

"She has no fever now. It may return about midnight. I think she is doing well. You will not disturb her?" the nurse entreated.

"No, I promise you that," with a slow, sweet smile. "I know how much there is at stake."

He did not want to write, nor even read. After arranging the light he drew his chair to the bed, and laid his head on the vacant pillow. Occasionally he took her limp hand, and noted the breathing with a critical ear. The warmth of the night did not disturb her. He bathed her forehead now and then with aromatic water, but she returned no sign of consciousness. He caught snatches of slumber—he was too anxious for them to be very long. It was almost daylight before the fever began to throb in her pulses, and it had much less vigor. His very soul went up in thankfulness. She would be no worse, then!

From his hospital clinic he drove down to the station. Yes, there was Millicent, in her grave sweetness, and his very gratitude shone dewily in his eyes, as he took both hands in his.

"Dell is not really ill?" she cried, startled at his expression.

"Not critically, but more than I can endure with equanimity. Scold me, Milly; I deserve it. I have let the poor girl tire herself all out. I have not looked after her as I ought. She has had so much energy, and vigor, and spirit. There has been a collapse. When she could go no further, she fainted dead away,—nature's alarm,—and has been lying since in a half-conscious, half-asleep fashion; but her strength is coming

back, thank God! There is nothing to do, only I did not want her to be alone through convalescence, or only with the nurse. I cannot thank you enough for coming."

"Oh, I would come for either or both your sakes. You have been such a good friend to me. I don't know how you can all stand the drain. Violet came home worn out. There was all Archie's sorrow."

"I think we have all been living at too high pressure."

He leaned out of the coupé suddenly, then turned the horse toward the sidewalk, and made an insistent gesture with his hand.

Reese Drayton was sauntering along. The little less than forty-eight hours had seemed half a lifetime.

"You were not in yesterday? Mrs. Carew has been ill——"

"Ill?" A light almost like terror flashed in the eyes.

"Yes. I ought not have sent her to Mrs. Seabury's. That took her last remnant of strength, and she has been in bed since, nature refusing to go a step further. I want to present you to Mrs. Carew's cousin, Mrs. von Lindorm."

Drayton expressed the conventional pleasure.

"Come in and solace us with what comfort you can. I think we shall have better news to-morrow."

"Do you know," Millicent exclaimed, as they were driving on, "that Mr. Drayton quite captivated everybody? Mr. Amory considers him a little too fascinating, I believe," and there was a vivacious light in her eyes. "And even Fanny was very much taken with him. Violet hopes he will go to California with them, which is odd, seeing she has no eyes for anyone but Paul. Really, I am glad to meet him."

"He is a study. While one is content to let most

people remain as the Lord made them, or rather as they make themselves, there are some one has a longing to mold over. Such a very little would make a fine, earnest man of him. He and the Osbornes are fast friends. And I sometimes wonder he did not make a greater impression on Lyndell the time she first saw him."

"Because she was very much in love, I suppose."

Millicent smiled confidently as she said this.

"Oh, not in that manner. I couldn't imagine Dell swerving a hair's breadth. She has the truest soul. And though people,—young men, I mean," smiling and flushing, "would insist upon falling in love with her, she has nothing of the coquette in her nature. She was tremendously honest with herself and Leonard. Dear Len! How happy he is! How proud of his babies!" Yet Dr. Carew sighed.

A few moments later he handed Milly out; and gave her wraps and satchel to the waiter. Then he ran upstairs.

"She is sleeping naturally," said the nurse. "When she wakes, I think the worst will be past."

There was a softness and relaxation to her skin, a tranquil deep breathing. But she seemed to have wasted away in these two days. He had a passionate desire to fold her in his arms, to kiss the flame of love back to her pallid cheeks. All these long years his father had lived with the light extinguished on the household altar; a cheerful, outgiving, generous life. Could he have been so brave with all his greater resources?

He knelt in silence a few moments beside the bed.

It was late in the afternoon when Lyndell Carew opened her eyes with the return to absolute intelligence apparent in them. Millicent was sitting at a little distance, doing some exquisitely fine tatting.

"Oh, Milly!" with tremulous pleasure. "Why—where have I been? Where am I? Not at Sherburne?"

"No, my dear. You are in your own house."

"But you——" She caught sight of the nurse. "Oh, have I been ill? I seem to have just roused from a troubled dream. How long——" eyeing the nurse questioningly.

"Only two days, and you are mending now. You must not distress yourself. There is no disease, only a collapse of nature's forces," replied the cool, trained voice.

Dell sat up suddenly. The room, everything seemed receding, not going round as in dizziness. And before the nurse could touch her shoulder with gentle hand, she dropped on the pillow of her own accord.

"How did you happen to come, Milly?" she asked presently.

"The doctor was afraid you would get lonesome and asked me to," returned Millicent quietly. "And I was glad to come and attend to some business."

"Tell me about everybody. I am too tired to talk."

"It is best for you not to exhaust your strength," and the nurse smiled.

The Amorys were getting ready for their journey. Fanny was undecided whether to join them or not. If Fanny went, *she*, Millicent, could not be spared. Everybody was well in their circle, but it was not thought that Mr. Whittingham would live the summer out, so Spencer had been married. And Nannie Henry would make just the kind of sweet, thoughtful daughter to cheer Mrs. Kirby's declining years. The new baby at Sherburne was dark and bright, and named for his father. Princess had big, purple blue eyes, and rings of golden hair. Tessy was the prettiest, daintiest little mother imaginable.

Milly took up a book presently, but she hardly read. It was so strange to see Lyndell lying there, pale and quiet, and to her cousin it recalled her childhood's illness. She was glad the nurse had also assured her it was nothing critical, but every line of the face expressed the utmost delicacy.

Dell closed her eyes. There was a vague desire to remember. For a long while it seemed to her she had been floating about in darkness and chaos. What had happened before?

She was so utterly motionless that the nurse said presently: "She is asleep, and sleep is the best thing for her. She ought not have been allowed to exhaust her vitality. Women are doing too much along every line. They do not take their work like men, and few are trained for it. They waste their strength upon too many things."

Had there been too many things in her life, too many interests and employments? She would like to lie here quiet for weeks, she was so tired. How had it all come? Something about Fanny disquieted her. It was groping for a lost thread. Fanny would go to California —was there a possibility for her that Dell could not cordially accept?

Dr. Carew came in, nodded, and walked straight over to the bed, and, bending down, kissed his wife. She wanted to put her arms about his neck and cry, but some curious lethargy held her back.

"Yes," exultingly; "the indications are all better. Let her sleep as much as she can, naturally. In a few days we shall have her sitting up." Then he crossed to Millicent. "You must take her to Sherburne, and I shall follow as soon as I am at liberty. I begin to feel

Mrs. Seabury, introduced the professor. My darling, I should have looked first for you,—I was very late,—and I had a fancy you were near by. Why did you not ask Mr. Drayton to bring you home?"

Her face was buried on his shoulder. He could not see, but she felt the scarlet flash. Then a shudder ran over her.

"My child, you are nervous to the last degree. I must get you some remedy."

She suffered herself to be laid down. When he came with the glass she said: "I want to tell you, I must tell you—about Gifford——"

"Not now. You simply cannot say another word. I believe you promised to obey your husband. And I also speak with a physician's authority. Gifford has been very ill, Millicent heard, but is recovering. I am afraid there was a recurrence of the old weakness. Not another word now."

He kissed the tremulous lips and was gone.

Millicent came up presently with some exquisite white roses.

"I confess to being very much interested in your Mr. Drayton," she said, with a bright color. "He begged me to bring you the roses; that is, if such things were allowed in the sick-room; and I told him it was now a convalescent's room; that you were sitting up a little."

"Is he—going away——"

"Oh, yes! Next week. I hope you will be able to say good-by to him."

Dell made no response. Could she ever see him again?

She sat up a few hours, but the spring and elasticity were gone out of her. The doctor was more than busy

revising his book in the proofs, and turned to Millicent for help. Just now there was a great pressure upon him, and the strain was beginning to tell.

Besides all other matters, an important meeting of the medical fraternity had been appointed for three days of the following week. Dr. Carew had been asked for one of the leading addresses. He had felt really complimented by the selection.

"We must take Dell out to-day for a short drive," he said to Millicent. "She puzzles me a little. With her physique she ought to be making rapid strides toward health. There is no tendency to any organic disease; she sleeps quite well, the nurse admits, and she is not wont to be so listless. She has had some worry about Gifford, but he could not be in better hands than Osborne's."

"The loss of his money must have been a sad blow, when he had worked so faithfully to acquire it."

"Poor fellow—yes. Dell's sympathies are infinite. Milly, suppose I send you both to Sherburne early in the week? I think Dell needs a little of my father's comforting. I can go away then with a clear conscience."

"I am certain she does need a change of scene. I can't quite understand her depression and the lack of interest. It is so unlike our bright, vivacious Dell. And I should like to have her to myself," smilingly. "Miss Alsden is so very careful that she shall not be unduly disturbed."

"We will take her out to-morrow in the delightful part of the morning. And it does seem inhospitable to send you back when I implored you to come."

He raised his eyes hesitatingly, then they kindled with amusement,

"To tell you the truth, I hardly knew how to come. But I would have given up anything for Dell, and I shall have to confess that the journey has turned quite to my own profit. But I should like to see Violet before they all leave. What day do you go to the convention?"

"I must start Tuesday evening. Then I shall come home by the southern route, and reach Sherburne by Saturday evening. I have been planning this little visit, and driving everything before me. I have had a long strain with all my other duties."

He leaned back and drew a deep, restful inspiration.

"But I have worked to some purpose. And I am not sure but we might take our long vacation, our wedding tour," laughing softly, as over a delightful thought.

"To California?"

"That shall be as Dell elects. She used to write such splendid, glowing letters to me." His face softened from the tense strain quite habitual to it. "But if we do go, you must accompany us. Only I am afraid we shall throw ourselves into work and interest again. We both ought to go to the Castle of Indolence for a few months. What were we considering? Oh, if you two could start Tuesday morning! I should feel Dell was as safe with you as if I was her bodyguard."

"Yes, why not!" answered Millicent.

"I will explain to Dell."

Bertram did, that evening. It was office hour, and he had but a few moments. There was never any spare time, it seemed, never any time when one could talk to the real conclusion of a matter.

Millicent would like to return, and he could not well give up this reunion—indeed, it was going to be advantageous to him. Dell would be in the old home, with his

father to watch and comfort her; and everybody to cheer her. And there would be only a few days of separation.

"Yes," Lyndell returned quietly, when he proposed the journey.

He stood beside her a moment in a puzzled mood. What had become of the old, glad eagerness and enthusiasm? Then he bent over and kissed her tenderly, pained to miss them, yet sure of their return.

She was not jealous that Millicent should be consulted and help plan, that she should be turned over to her hands. It seemed just now as if nothing mattered. There was some inward hardness, coldness—she did not understand it herself.

It was not that she had been tempted from her husband's side by any specious, dangerous reasoning. She could not remember ever discussing marriage even in the abstract with Mr. Drayton. They had gone over the humanitarian questions, the social improvement of mankind, charities, music, art, and halted on the mysterious boundaries of religions apart from Christianity. They had both accepted a certain charming friendliness, but was it not of her husband's making?

How far, then, was she answerable for any unwarranted feeling on Reese Drayton's part? That one glance of his eyes seemed to confront her with a power and knowledge that still made her shiver.

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CHAPTER XXI.

HEART TO HEART.

DR. CAREW put his wife and her cousin in the drawing-room car, with everything for a comfortable journey. Lyndell had recovered her physical strength in some degree, but here, in the throng of bustling, smiling, energetic people, she looked more languid than ever. Even the warm day brought no flush to her cheek.

"I shall hardly have a comfortable moment until I get to Sherburne," he said anxiously. "Will you send for father at once? And take Tessy for a ministering angel. God put her in the world for that, even if he did give her to Leonard. Dell,"—studying her in a desperate sort of way,—"shall I give up this trip——"

"Oh, no, no!" she interrupted. "I am not such a baby as that. And I shall have them all to comfort me."

She was overwhelmed with a sudden remorse.

"It wouldn't take much to persuade me."

"I am not going to persuade." She roused herself, and a faint color fluttered over her cheek. "I am not ill now—and I shall improve."

"Saturday will be here soon. Until then, good-by! Heaven have you in its keeping."

He loved her very much. She saw that in his eyes, heard it in his deep, penetrating tone. What dreadful

apathy had taken possession of her! Even the tears were hot and unshed.

He had so many things to occupy him. Yet all the time, like an undercurrent, he went back to the face and figure of his wife, drooping a little as that last glimpse had given it to him; the pallid cheek, the shade under the eyes, the lines of depression about the mouth indicated something farther-reaching than mere fatigue—a mental disturbance. She was too large-hearted, too proud, and too desirous of his success to feel resentful that he should have spent so much time over his book. That was done; some other things were finished for the present, and now he would devote a few months to her. Yes, she had been very good and patient. A man's life was forth-going, not so self-centered as a woman's. It had to do with the world.

Just as he reached the corner someone came down his own stoop and turned irresolutely, seemed to hesitate. He knew the supple figure, with a kind of cultivated elegance no amount of roughing had ever taken out of the graceful lines.

"Drayton!" Dr. Carew raised his voice a trifle, and the other turned.

"Were you coming in to say good-by, or did you say it yesterday? I saw the ladies off this morning, and I take the evening train for Chicago. Come in."

"Are you sure I shall not disturb you?" Drayton asked. There was a wistfulness in the voice that caught Dr. Carew's ear.

"Oh, no! You are a comfortable fellow to get along with," and the doctor smiled. "So long as you don't mind my picking up a few traps and looking over some notes. Why, I have hardly seen you the last week. And

you are going West! Well, I should miss you a good deal if I had not planned a tour of some kind myself. I am beginning to feel the need of a little respite. What if you should see us out there——"

He had opened the hall door and led his guest up to the library. Now he paused and faced him with the unfinished sentence, as if awaiting a response.

"Have you no other place in view?"

"Well, Europe is left. I wasn't quite sure I wanted to spend so much time just now. Europe has been a sort of dream of leisure to myself and Mrs. Carew."

"Take a little of it, then. You will be the better for it."

"I am not sure but your counsel is good. There would be too much interest in perfecting plans;" smiling up, and struck by the gravity of the eyes fixed upon him. "You don't mean that you have changed or lost heart in the scheme, Drayton?"

"No. My offer to you was in good faith, and I shall consult Mr. Osborne about its feasibility. At all events the land is there for you to take or leave. But the other might be better for Mrs. Carew."

"The quiet. Yes. I think she has thrown herself too strongly into the very soul of things, if depths can be considered soul. I feel anxious. She had always had such splendid health and nerves, and all that, yet she has not yet recovered as I expected. She is unlike her olden self. I join her on Saturday, and then we will see."

"She was ill that evening at Mrs. Seabury's."

"Yes. You should have brought her home—or did you not know it?"

His tone was what one might use to a brother, with almost a tint of reproach in it.

Reese Drayton had wondered during the last week if there was anything for him to say in the matter. He had the courage to say it if it was necessary.

"I knew it. She really was not fit to go out that evening——"

"And I insisted upon it," interrupted the doctor, startled into a sudden remorse.

"There was another cause. Carew, you are wise in many points; you are an enthusiastic student, and will be all your life. I envy you that quality. Some great trial or some magnificent emotion"—smiling curiously—"might rouse me; but I doubt if either comes into my life. But there are little traits and weaknesses in human nature that you may slip over unawares."

"My dear fellow, I don't pretend to all wisdom. Every year I grow more sensible of my own lack and how much there is to learn. I don't wonder men have lost their senses in despair at the inexhaustibleness of the subject. I might, if I did not believe in another world of development, and that no knowledge emanating from the great Divine Source is ever lost. When I reach the point where I think I do know it all, I shall have lost *my* senses."

The fine, generous tone of the voice moved his listener. For a moment he wavered. Yes, he *did* owe this explanation. Let him give it as simply and truthfully as possible. There was something grand and unsuspicious in Dr. Carew that appealed to his honor. He would make him the judge.

Drayton paced the room a time or two. Then he

halted at the corner of the desk where Carew was paging some papers and laying them in a cover.

"Carew," he began in a low, resolute tone, "I must say this to you, and make you the arbiter of any future friendship. I've never been given to envying or longing, but if Heaven had favored me with a brother like you—a younger brother that I could have taken pride in and fraternized with, I should not have led such an aimless existence. You and Bevis Osborne attain to my standard of men. Oh, I dare say there are many others scattered round the world, only they have not come my way."

"You could go out to meet some of them, I suppose?" with a quaint touch of pleasantry. "Thank you for your—shall I say over-appreciation?"

Reese Drayton's face was inexplicably serious as he met Carew's almost laughing eyes.

"When I have finished, I shall accept your honest decision without a word," the former went on gravely.

"When I first met Miss Sherburne, at her cousin's, I was very much attracted by her. I had not been a general admirer of women, perhaps from nearly always meeting them in society where such traits as simplicity and truthfulness are at a discount. I had never speculated much as to whether I should marry or not. I liked her extremely. She was a bright, frank, ingenuous girl, with independence enough to have likes and tastes and beliefs of her own. That young fellow, Lepage, wanted to appropriate her—I still think he was a good deal in love with her."

"No, it was not that," interrupted Bertram; "there was a sad episode in his life that her courage bridged over. He was right to appreciate it, to be deeply grateful."

"Well—he was jealous and uncomfortable. I thought it would be the veriest madness and sacrifice for her to learn to care for him. We played at cross purposes a little, and he informed me she was engaged to her girlhood's hero. She seemed so young. Not silly or crude, understand."

Dr. Carew was watching the speaker with attentive eyes and a half smile crossed his face.

"I liked her very much. I had manliness enough to dream my dreams to myself after that. I used to wonder what she would be in full womanhood. No one referred to her lover, and I fancied he was some neighboring young man in the town where they all lived. I did speculate as to whether in her marriage she would ever reach the development possible to her. I was not sure whether I wanted to see her or not, certainly not if her environment had dwarfed her. It was a surprise to meet her again, and it follows that I had an interest in her husband."

Bertram made an inclination of the head and his eyes drooped on the page under his hand. He felt a sudden, sharp consciousness go through every nerve with a pang. Was this the key to Dell's illness? Was there anything else——

There was a moment's silence that seemed interminable.

"I think if she had not been married I should have tried to win her. If she had been wrong and wretchedly mated—well, you understand how temptation and sin come into the world. There is one sentence applicable to Mrs. Carew—'The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her.' It was penned for women like her. And when that cousin, who seems after all to be a rather weak,

unstable fellow, was in trouble again, it was in my power to do what even Osborne could not have done, and I did it for her sake, not his; though no one, not even Lepage, is likely to know all."

"Was it the old story?" Carew felt strangely confused.

"She never knew the worst," evasively. "I hope he will have the sense never to tell her. This and your friendliness gave me—shall I say a sort of elder brother's privilege? Perhaps you were too generous, Carew! At all events, the night at Mrs. Seabury's some gossiping tongue made a comment that hurt her cruelly. This was why I could not have taken her home, why I tell you this story. In her conscious innocence she should have flung it to the winds. I think she would if she had been well. I have not seen her since that night, though I have called to inquire about her. This is why I leave the decision with you as to whether I shall ever see her again."

Carew sprang up and grasped Drayton's hand. Like a swift arrow of light, a subtle knowledge penetrated him, and the half-confused, half-mysterious signification was revealed. She would never have told him, she could not, he thought then, and the thorn would have gone on pricking her. He felt profoundly tender toward this man who had seen a possibility that might have transfigured his whole life, but was not for him. A nature less generous would not have reached up to the point of highest manhood.

"I never had a brother either. In my boyhood my father's love made amends for the loss of any other tie. There are friendships that go as deep, ring as true, as blood relationship. But as a brother I might be—exigent.

I should want you to come up to the full stature God designed for you."

"Thank you." The voice was husky with emotion. "Will you tell her that I explained that evening's incident? Do not let her fret over it. There have been idle tongues from the beginning. Let her hold herself regally above them."

Carew drew a long breath. Was he quite guiltless? No one can tell all the subtleness of temptation until it has been overcome and one looks at it dispassionately. "Lead us not into temptation"—let us also withhold it from another.

Understanding what was in the other's heart, man fashion, they closed a door on the matter.

"Yes, we shall go to Europe for a while," Carew said, as if that had been the subject under immediate discussion. "But I shall want to hear. I will send you my address before we start. Drayton, how can we all thank you for your interest in that poor boy, who, prodigal-like, has returned."

"The interest, the real work, belongs to a man I may some day commend you to. The money only was my share. I am glad I saw the opportunity. And now I must not detain you."

They clasped hands in honest, lasting friendship.

Dr. Carew packed his satchel hurriedly. He had not a moment to lose, neither did he grudge a second given to the confidence. There was a high, fine light in his face, born of confidence and resolution. Almost he was tempted to fly to Lyndell. Four days! It seemed as if half his life would vanish in that brief space. Not even as a lover had he been so impatient. Could he annihilate distance and pro-

ject a strange, sweet consciousness to her to refresh her weary soul?

Weary enough it was with the journey, both soul and body. Leonard Beaumanoir met them in Washington, not a little startled by Dell's paleness and air of depression. But he would not hear of her stopping at the old doctor's, as they often called him now. She should go straight home to Tessy's love and care.

Home! How restful it sounded!

They were all there to greet her. Aunt Aurelia took her in a fond, convulsive clasp.

"My dear child! I had no idea you had been so ill," she cried, in astonishment.

"I have not been so very ill. Only I have not recovered as I ought. But now that I am here with you all, I shall soon get well. I *do* think I was homesick."

Her eyes were full of tears. Oh, how delightful to be so well loved, to be taken into every heart! And oh, the bloom and beauty and sweetness everywhere, and the heavenly peace in Tessy Beaumanoir's face! Had all the blessedness of life come to her?

Everybody wanted to do something—not officiously, but in a gentle manner, as if they were all glad to get her back again. She listened to the simple, kindly, neighborhood news—who was married, houses where new baby life had come, a few who had gone out on the long journey, their work finished, who of the grown-up children, so little a brief while ago, were playing at lovers. It was like an idyl.

That evening the Amorys came over to say good-by. Fanny sent hers with Violet. Not so long a while ago she would have been glad to show her elation that Reese

Drayton had joined the party. She had counted confidently on a visit, and he had not come, to her chagrin. But a day or two ago word had reached them as to where and at what time he would meet them.

Violet was eager that Dell and the doctor should rejoin them later on. Dell could not think at present whether she wanted to or not. They took Milly back with them, and then the house settled to quiet,—the soft, country quiet, with now and then the rustle of leaves, the hum of some early insects, and the far off whip-poor-will—far enough off to be plaintive rather than sad.

She had not thought to sleep. Nights had been spent in so much restless reflection of late, so much anxious questioning of duty and right, and how far she had a right to the secret half betrayed, that she should never have known at all. Would Bertram think she had been wicked enough to encourage such an admiration?

She forgot it all, and fell asleep. Was there some revivifying power in the air, some delicious tranquillity that soothed unrestful pulses? For with her earliest breath she felt almost well, and her first desire, so strong that it was a prayer, was to see her husband. They were so rarely separated, yet now she felt as if they had been living apart an endless while.

The children were fascinating. Princess—they had not given up calling the little girl that—was the embodiment of merry, dainty babyhood, and Master Ned, a beautiful, manly little fellow, was devoted to Aunt Aurelia with a faithfulness that withstood even Dell's blandishments. The elder Edward with his wife and son were to spend some time at Beaumanoir, to make up for Violet's defection. Aunt Julia was to come up with her little granddaughter, who was already the idol of her heart.

And so, when Dr. Carew came jogging around the turn in the drive, Lyndell lay pillowed in the hammock, her thin cheeks in pale bloom, and her heavy eyes brightened by the animation all about her.

"What have you been doing?" he demanded. "Bertram said you had not been really ill, but tired out and exhausted. What care has he been taking of you?"

He had clasped her a moment in his arms, then laid her down, startled at the quick pallor.

But her cheek flushed now. Not the soft quiver of half protest, half amusement, but the dull red of unanswerable accusation. She might nurse a suspicion of neglect, but she resented it in the tone of another. Millicent had a hundred tender excuses for Bertram.

"I think I couldn't have suffered for care. There was a nurse and Millicent. And I had been doing too much, I suppose. There are so many calls upon one. Then, you know, I always had been well. I did not suppose I could reach the end of my strength."

"It wasn't a fever?" sharply.

"I had a little fever. It was exhaustion mostly. And then I didn't seem to get well."

He pulled up a chair and sat beside her, studying her so closely that her eyes drooped and her cheeks flushed again. Could she open her heart to him?

"And—about the book?"

"Oh, that is all done. You ought to scold him, Papa Carew," she said, with a flash of her olden spirit. "Out all day with a hundred and one things on his mind, and then writing until almost morning. His nerves and body must be made of steel."

"And you went to bed and cried."

"I had better sense," indignantly.

Dr. Carew laughed. She had not lost all her spirit.

"And then he must go posting off to fill up his brains with some more vagaries!"

"A great city is full of vagaries, all the time," she returned, with a little sigh. "And now tell me about dear Aunt Neale." She had a nervous feeling that she was not quite a safe topic for conversation with such a keen-eyed questioner. She was not strong enough to discuss her doubts—perhaps just now she was not ready to be set right, even if she did feel she had strayed in forbidden paths.

Then they talked of Archie's ill-fated marriage, of the neighborhood changes, of the people growing old and dropping out.

"But Aunt Aurelia and Miss Eliza have renewed their youth. What elixir did the new mistress of Sherburne bring with her to work such wonders? I suppose the sweet baby voices and baby love helped. The choicest gift of your life was giving her to the old house. I have sometimes wondered if the sacrifice had not been greater than we all thought—if you had been repaid fourfold!"

"I couldn't expect to have it all in this brief while."

Her voice trembled and her eyes overflowed with tears. He leaned over and kissed her fervently on the fair forehead. Oh, was she happy? He was almost afraid.

"I'll be up again to-morrow," and he turned abruptly away.

Tessy laid her baby in his cradle and went out to Dell. She had been busy all the morning, not fussy or important, but flitting hither and thither, a vision of sunniness that seemed to diffuse content and cheeriness everywhere. It was a thing to be felt rather than described.

She had some pretty sewing in her hands, baby attire, and she drew her wicker chair so that she could smile into Dell's face as she moved slowly, almost as if the breeze rocked her. It was a large, warm picture, and the glow revivified Lyndell with the sensation of a sudden healing draught.

"Tessy," in a soft, longing tone, "did you ever feel that you were unreal, that your tenseness would not relax, and you could never get back to the heart of things, even with the most earnest desire?"

Tessy opened her clear, shining eyes widely, and after a moment said: "Why not keep in the heart of things, when God has not taken them away? If he had, would it not be a sign that something else is needed, or patience, until we can see clearly again?"

"But if one should go out—drift out without realizing —waken to a sad consciousness——"

"Why not retrace one's steps? And there is a chance of being picked up by a friendly hand, even on the wide ocean." The tone was inexpressibly tender.

There was a silence in which the birds sang and the wind shook fragrance out of the sweet briar near by.

"You are very happy," Dell said, but the longing smote the listener's heart.

"Why should I not be? I have all the things I want."

"All." It was not a question, but repeated lingeringly with a kind of pathos. Would she, Dell, have found her highest happiness in this uneventful round? Oh, there were the children!

"You have been ill and are depressed. When you are rested, everything will look bright again," Tessy said confidently.

"I am trying to think how much is illness. I was

not——" She paused and colored, then added : "I was tired out, but the nurse and Milly took such good care of me that I ought to have been rested a week ago. I am down in the 'Slough of Despond,'" with a forced sort of laugh. "The things I have been trying to take pleasure in seem empty and wearisome."

"Trying? Are you sure they were the right kind of things, the things that make for happiness?"

"No, I am not sure." Dell sat up straighter, and pushed the pillows behind her back. "Tessy, how did you manage in the city? You were in good works; you had pleasures and friends, and Bertram used to drop in for—for rest and comfort?" hesitating a little.

"But I did not undertake as much as you. I am not sure," smilingly, "but the limited women have the best times. Violet was talking over the entertainments, the clubs, the discussions, and everything. Doesn't it stir people up continually, until restlessness is considered a real striving after inspiration? You want to live right in the midst of things, and the true inspiration is to *do*, not to keep searching; not to fly off at every tangent. You see," with her bright, comforting glance, "I was not an intellectual woman. I could not have found my compensation in the heights. While we are here we do belong to the earth. I suppose God put us here to enjoy the fullness thereof, to enjoy and to give; not to struggle continually for what does not belong here. The kingdom of heaven is within. When we go plunging down into the depths we may bring up something, but not the glory. And when we reach up to the heights, it must be spiritually. What we shall be hereafter belongs to the next life. The best of this life is the true preparation."

"But if one knew what was the best," said the girl, who had been trying many things.

"There is only one rule: 'Hold fast of that which is good.' But after a while I think people do not hold fast of anything. They are always trying on, and they find some idea or theory or belief that looks more brilliant or promising. So they are never at rest, they are only getting ready to live. Meanwhile, the meek, the simpler-minded, the content, go in and possess the earth, the true, every-day living, the tender, honest, loving. We have to live out the truths to see and understand the message of great gladness."

Dell turned away her face. There were tears in her eyes. She had wanted to go beyond the every-day living. She had been striving to reach up to the great things, and their bright coldness had chilled her. The heart, the vital blessedness, seemed taken out of them. She had fancied she would be a more fitting companion for Bertram. He admired Millicent, and was proud of her success.

Millicent had accepted the round of every-day duties cheerfully. She would gladly have taken this Western journey, but she did not like to have her mother left alone, for Edward's wife would be going hither and thither. She said: "When Nora is older and can appreciate travel, we shall take many pleasures together." Violet never lost herself in her husband's fame.

Had she not made a mistake somewhere? But Bertram had been so engrossed. How dreary the hours would have been with no companionship! She had grown tired of reading and the endless tangle of study.

But when she looked down deep in her heart, only the

love for her husband was there. She had hardly dared question herself since that unfortunate night. Had she encouraged attentions from Mr. Drayton? She had seen enough of society to know these episodes were of common occurrence. Where was the dividing line of friendship?

"Letters, Mrs. Leonard," exclaimed a familiar voice, breaking in on her perplexed reverie.

Two for Mrs. Leonard and one for Mrs. Carew. Dell opened hers. It was long, and had three dates. One was "At home in the library." Reese Drayton had been in to say good-by. There was no time to detail the long conversation, which would interest her later on. Already the house had taken on a lonesome aspect. He was following her in his mind. Was she very tired? It seemed an endless while until Saturday. What did his father say? He, Bertram, would be soundly scolded for not taking better care of her. Had he put his book before all else? He should never let anything come between again, not even the siren voice of fame.

Then in the evening on the train he had continued his epistle, finishing it at breakfast. It brought the warm color to her cheek, it was such an ardent love letter. It filled her with a splendid sort of courage. When he came she would have no fear. There would be time to listen to her, and they would begin over anew. For she realized that they had drifted apart, but love had not been thrust aside, or grown cold.

"The doctor's visit has done you good already," declared Aunt Aurelia, as she came in to dinner. For Dell's eyes were brighter, and the mouth had lost its lines of depression.

"And Sherburne House and Tessy and everybody."

"You were homesick," said Cousin Eliza.

She did not want much to eat, for though her spirits had suddenly risen, bodily wants had not kept pace with them. Afterward there was a long indoor rest, and then she and Tessy went to drive in the late afternoon, with Princess on Dell's lap chattering pretty baby words.

And Tessy gathered that there had been some mental disquiet, just what, only one human soul had the right to listen to. But she could minister in her simple healing way to the unrest and the strivings, to the heart that was not only willing, but ready, to come back to the beginning, like a little child.

It seemed to Dell the next morning as if she had slept off the weariness and the desperate questioning with which she had tortured herself. When the doctor came he was quite surprised.

"I want you to take me around as you used," she began, with a pretty air of command. "There are tangles for you to straighten out, Papa Carew. Why do you suppose I go off zigzaging and running into briars and underbrush, while Tessy stays in her pasture and grows stronger and sweeter with the fragrance and richness?"

He glanced from one to the other. Here was a girl's life yet, and had not come to full fruition. He was glad there was an unsatisfied longing. He had been almost afraid the great world would sweep her into the other current where life-barks grated on the rough rocks and were stranded.

"Are you quite strong enough?" dubiously.

"Oh, I shall not make all the visits," archly. "When I get tired you shall go and inflict me upon Aunt Neale. And Tessy may come for me toward evening."

She was his olden girl all the morning, bright and tender, and at times dropping into pathos. Miss Neale was delighted to welcome her, and all the afternoon she lay on the old sofa listening to the small things of the elder woman's life and wondering how they could have fashioned so sweet a nature. To the great world they would have seemed trivial, but one had only to look at the noble, tender face, coming to have the serene beauty of age, and compare it with the fretted, anxious countenances that had never reached true happiness with all their effort.

Aunt Neale made much of her in a dozen different ways. They went back to the old time when she had been brought here as a sure refuge ; of the cousins who were children no longer, and the new children coming to take their places.

The next afternoon Tessy drove her into Ardmore. Leonard would be on the same train with Bertram. The young people would spend Sunday at the Carews'.

Bertram looked tired and worn, the days, and even the nights, had been so full and exhausting. But his face was electrified as he glanced at his wife.

"I am envious of father's skill," he declared, kissing her. "You look like a new creature."

The lovely color fluttered over her countenance. It had hardly gained strength to stay as yet.

"Let us walk home," she entreated. "I have been saving myself all day. Aunt Neale wanted to drive down, but I would not let her."

Leonard demurred, Dell would be sure to tire herself all out. Bertram looked uncertain.

"Yes," she declared, with some of her old willfulness, putting her arm in her husband's.

They soon left the paved street. There was a short cut, a well-trodden path, and another leading farther around at the edge of what had once been a wood, and was now only a straggling thicket.

"My darling!" Bertram began, "it seems like a miracle."

"Perhaps I wasn't as really ill—some of it was mental," Dell began in a hesitating manner. "I wanted you to come this way—I had so much to tell you. There never had seemed any time. It was not that I wanted a secret. It was not quite my own. But it came in between, it——"

She was trembling so that he put his arms around her waist. Then he descried part of a fallen tree trunk that had been denuded of its limbs, and he almost carried her to it. Her face was scarlet, and there was a mistiness about her eyes that so entreated him, he could not resist coming to her rescue.

"About Gifford. Yes, I know it all now. I ought to have helped you. A sorrow shared is a sorrow lightened. I don't know how you did bear up so bravely under it—that and Archie's trouble. My poor child! And I was so occupied with myself."

"I wanted to tell you—later on. I asked Mr Drayton to do what he could. I don't know how or where he found Gifford—I don't believe I shall ever care to know. And I hope he is safe now. You see Violet and all of them were there, and Archie's sorrow was so engrossing, and——"

"And I had hardly a moment—yes."

"I thought I wouldn't trouble you with it then."

Her breath came rapidly. The first flush had faded to pallor. Her eyes were downcast.

"But that is not all." Her voice was a tremulous whisper, and her head sank on his shoulder.

"My poor darling, I know it all. I know now that I left you alone to confront what might have been a temptation to some women and some men. But I had the most unbounded confidence in you. If I had not felt so sure of your love—yet I see now where I unconsciously made it a danger for you, and no man has a right to place temptation in the way of his brother man. We cannot always be sure of strength to resist. It is you who must forgive—you who must test my affection again, for I want your whole trust. I have given the world too much, and you too little. I have been striving for fame and approbation, and a place in the front rank among my fellow-scientists. I was so proud to come up to them in my early manhood. Home and love and the girl I had coveted, the woman I had won, were pushed aside for a little while——"

"Oh, do not say that!" she cried vehemently. "I was glad to stand aside. I wanted you to come up to the first and best. I was not grudging."

"I am afraid you were too heroic, too self-sacrificing. I meant to make amends in this coming time. For there never was an hour that I did not love you, or failed to believe that your love was wholly mine. A jealous, exacting woman might have spurred me to the point of duty sooner, but your tender abnegation of self has brought me the pang of an accusing conscience. I feel as if I ought to earn your love over again."

He kissed down into the sweet, half-hidden face. Should she go on? Was there any need of recalling that miserable evening? Then she gave a sudden start. He should know it all now. They would begin anew.

"Oh," she exclaimed, "did you see, did you—guess?" She would not say suspect.

"You must hear the whole story. Reese Drayton came to me after you were gone, and with a manliness I shall always admire, gave me the key to your illness and nervous depression—that had puzzled me, I must confess. And because I have won what he is sorry to miss, because I think you are capable of understanding without vanity or elation that a man might have been glad to marry you if you had been free, I tell you this. Will it surprise you if I say that we are to remain friends? My darling, there is nothing to blame yourself for. You stand high in his esteem, and I think through these days of separation I have loved you as never before. We will begin our lives anew. Youth is not always wise; if it were there would be no use for experience. But we can always walk more wisely by its light."

He held her tightly to his side, and she felt his heart beat in great bounds. They belonged to each other in a new, mysterious manner, because they had seen a possibility of the loss and sorrow in the world crueler than death. It would make them tenderer to all souls going astray through lack of guidance rather than any willful sin.

He spoke again presently. "It was a word of gossip that night at Mrs. Seabury's. Dell, do you want to repeat it?"

His soft voice said she was quite at liberty to do as she thought wisest.

"It began about Fanny—the part we heard," Dell explained hurriedly. "About his attentions to her, and meaning or not meaning to marry her, but making

it an excuse—a cloak——" Her voice failed in a sob.

"There was no excuse needed, when I trusted you both. It is a miserable world when one must look at the sacred things of life through a distorted vision. Let it go forever. Perhaps I needed the warning. I might have grown still more engrossed and neglectful."

"He will go out there and marry Fanny!" she cried, in sudden protest. "He will think it a duty."

"He has seen Millicent and admires her. He has known you and Violet. He can hardly assume it a duty to throw away a life that he is just beginning to appreciate, that he may make more noble as the years go on. Or if Fanny can be redeemed to true womanhood by a love such as he can give, shall we not pray for it?"

There was a great struggle in Lyndell Carew's soul. She could rejoice if this came to someone appreciative, who could build up and not pull down, who could reward with large-heartedness.

The birds were singing homeward songs as they swung in the branches. The shadows were lengthening, the air was growing soft and fragrant.

"They will wonder what has become of us," Bertram said presently. "Are you rested enough to go on?"

He brought her back to every-day life with his strong, cordial tone. His protecting arm was round her. How safe and sheltered she felt! Her heart swelled with a new comprehension of love made complete, not all at once, but through the long years. All the vital impulses gathered in one desire. It was as if she was beginning wedded life with solemn reverence.

He put her thought into words that startled her.

Aunt Neale was standing by the old gateway look-

ing like a vague picture in the twilight under the tall syringa.

"Oh," she cried, "we were beginning to feel worried. Your father just missed the train——"

"We went on a wedding journey." Bertram Carew kissed his aunt and then his wife, and smiled with rare sweetness. "It has been a sort of boy and girl playing at marriage. I don't think we have quite understood the sacredness until now"

The father looked from one to the other. There were a new depth and fervor in Dell's eyes, and a reverent sweetness in Bertram's voice. Whatever fear the father might have had, vanished.

Dell was very tired after supper, and lay on the old sofa, while the two men talked. Bertram was justly proud of his successes, his position, and the name he was winning, and his father's eyes kindled with delight.

"We are going to have our holiday," he announced, when the other subjects had been thoroughly discussed. "I did think a little of California, but we have both had quite a drain through the winter. My run over Europe was a mere nothing, and now I am going to take Dell for a guide and advisor. I have made arrangements about my practice, and the book is off my hands," laughing lightly. "Suppose you shut up the house and go with us, you and Aunt Neale."

The doctor shrugged his shoulders and wrinkled up his face. It had been one of his unfulfilled dreams. And to go with his son—with his children!

Dell sprang up and clasped her arms about his neck.

"Papa Carew," she cried, "you surely cannot refuse me, when one of my best joys is being your daughter."

"There will be a fortnight or so to think it over," rejoined Bertram. "Yes, Dell, I am quite sure he cannot resist us. He has earned his holiday."

Dell stretched out one arm to her husband, who took it and smiled. Love, eternal and imperishable, had renewed itself in both hearts.

THE END.

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